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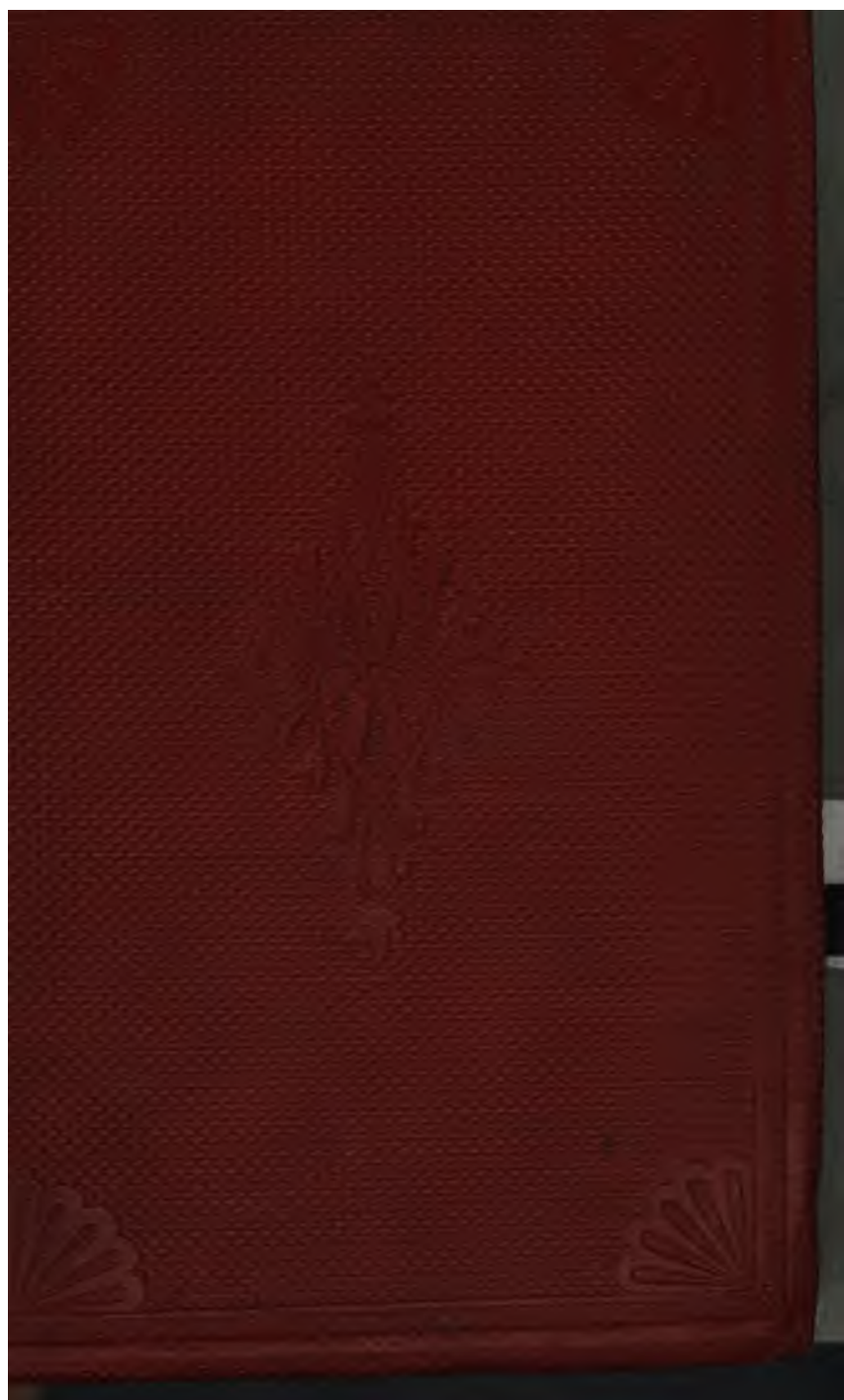
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MISS EMILY KLEONORA'S VISIT TO THE COTTAGE OF BETTS THE BLACKSMITH.—P. 62.

THE
CURATE AND THE RECTOR.

A Domestic Story.

BY

ELIZABETH STRUTT,

AUTHOR OF

"CHANCES AND CHANGES," "DOMESTIC RESIDENCE IN SWITZERLAND,"
ETC. ETC. ETC.

"The great and small but rarely meet
On terms of amity complete."—COWPER.

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THE CURATE AND THE RECTOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE EQUESTRIAN AND THE PEDESTRIAN.

IT was on a fine day towards the end of November—that is to say, *fine for the time of the year*, pleasant overhead and wet underfoot—that Clement Courtney, a “fast” young Cantab, found himself on a beautiful blood-horse, taking the road to Gormanton, a few miles from Cambridge, with intent to call on the Rev. Dr. Plufty, the rector of the place. It was only the second time he had mounted his new purchase, and therefore it was provoking enough that the state of the highways and by-ways did not admit of anything beyond “the right butterwoman’s rate to market,” unless he chose to show off his steed at the expense of his own habiliments. Unaccustomed to moderation in any of his movements, he found it so annoying on the present occasion, having half a dozen similar visits to pay that morning, in dissimilar directions, that he was almost tempted to envy a pedestrian a little way before him, who, with the advantage of a raised causeway, and by occasionally skipping over patches of mud and pools of water, managed to keep ahead of the fashionably-booted and pantalooned equestrian. To be sure, the pedestrian had, neither in person or dress, much impediment in the way of speed: he was as lean as the greyhound, whose swiftness he seemed bent on emulating; his threadbare black coat was buttoned up close to his throat; his knee-breeches were met by rusty silk stockings, very considerably darned about the heels; and in order to avoid the danger of his hat blowing off in the brisk wind which beat full in his face, he had tied it down with a blue-and-white cotton pocket-handkerchief; gloves he had none, which was the

reason, perhaps, that he carried his hands in his pockets. Thus he trotted cheerily on until Courtney, provoked at seeing himself kept in the rear, resolved to pass his unconscious rival in the race. Unfortunately, whilst thus resolving, he mechanically clapped spurs to his horse, who, starting indignantly at the unnecessary hint, set off at a speed which quickly brought his master to the Rectory; though not without his seeing, with much vexation, that, in passing the pedestrian, he had inflicted upon him the inconvenience of a splashing, which he had been so careful to avoid for himself. He turned his head to apologize, but his horse bore him quickly out of hearing, and moreover the poor pedestrian was too busy wiping away the dirt with the handkerchief which he had taken from his hat for that purpose to give a single look towards either horse or rider.

Clement Courtney was young and handsome, in the unencumbered possession of a fine landed property, and had, moreover, a valuable living in his gift, at the death of the incumbent, who was at that time verging on his eightieth year. Is it necessary to add that he was received by Doctor and Mrs. Pluffy, and by the two Misses Pluffy, with the most cordial welcome?—that he was thanked on all sides for his amiable attention, in taking the trouble to come out to see them on such a cold day, and along such dirty roads?—that an elegant sandwich tray, flanked with choice French wines, was served up to him in a tic-tac; and that the papa and mamma, and both the daughters, laughed every time he opened his mouth, whether it was to let a good thing out, or to put a good thing in? Happening, however, to cast his eyes to the window, as he held up a glass of Frontignac, the young man perceived, at that instant, the pedestrian coming up the lawn, at so much slower a rate, and with so much less cheerful an air, than that which had before attracted his attention, that he reproached himself for having, perhaps, caused the alteration by the unlucky start of his horse in the mire. He had just before been relating his mischance to the party, who had all laughed at it immoderately, as a most excellent joke. Hastily putting down his glass and catching up his hat, he exclaimed, "Unfortunate fellow that I am! why, here is the very man coming up the lawn; let me make my escape!" But this,

neither the Doctor, nor Mrs. Pluffy, nor Miss Pluffy, nor Miss Emily Eleonora Pluffy, would permit him to do. Miss Emily Eleonora ran to the door with charming *naïveté* to prevent it; and Miss Pluffy ran to the window to reconnoitre the enemy. "La!" she exclaimed, dropping her eye-glass in an instant, "it is only Mr. Slender, 'pa's curate;—and what a quiz he does look, to be sure!—that rusty black coat of his, it lasts for ever!"

"I am afraid it has got its deathblow this morning," said the Cantab, casting a look in the glass at his own fashionable cut; "but I positively cannot stand the interview—he is just at the door."

"Oh, but he always comes in at the back door!" cried Miss Emily Eleonora; "and 'pa will see him in the inner drawing-room."

"Yes, yes," said the doctor, "come, sit down again; take another glass of wine."

"And another little thin slice of this reindeer's tongue," said Mrs. Pluffy. And while they were thus complimenting and carving, a servant in a rich livery, coming up to the doctor, whispered in a significant tone, "Mr. Slender, sir."

"Show him into the next room," said the doctor—"but, no; he can wait below till we have finished luncheon; tell him I am particularly busy just now."

And so, in fact, he was, and so he continued to be, for nearly half an hour longer, till Courtney, who felt uncomfortable at the thought of the poor pedestrian being thus kept waiting in a cold room, whilst they were all enjoying themselves by a good fire, once more rose, saying he was afraid he was detaining the doctor. Rather, however, than he should go, the doctor got up, rang the bell, and, after fortifying himself with a third glass of Madeira, walked off into the next room, to give audience to his fellow-labourer in the vineyard.

The particulars of this audience will, perhaps, be best understood by an extract from the "Curate's Journal"—for the good man thought it a wholesome thing to keep a diary of events, the humble and monotonous character of which he relieved by sundry pious reflections and a rigid scrutiny into his own actions—those of his neighbour coming in for but a very small share of his criticism,—and into his

spiritual deportment, under the circumstances that fell to his temporal lot.

The conversation between the curate and the rector was carried on in too low a tone on the part of Mr. Slender for any portion of it to be heard in the next room, amidst the chattering and giggling of the young ladies ; but the doctor's replies and rejoinders being given *ex cathedra*, reached the ear of Courtney more than once, quite distinctly enough to divert his attention from the attractions of Miss Pluffy's album, which lay invitingly open on the table. The interview, however, did not last long ; at the end of a quarter of an hour the pedestrian was seen going down the lawn with an air of even more sadness and inquietude than he had betrayed in coming up ; and the doctor returned into the drawing-room, and threw himself again into his well-cushioned arm-chair, his complexion heightened to the colour of the crimson damask with anger. Clement Courtney's cheek had caught something of the same tinge, and he felt his eyes sparkle with an expression which he thought it as well to hide by casting them down very earnestly on a delicate pencil drawing in the album, much to the gratification of Miss Pluffy, who had paid eighteenpence for it the day before, through the negotiation of the lady's-maid, to a young artist, who was starving in a garret in Cambridge, on the simple condition that she should put her own initials, instead of his own, in the corner.

At length the doctor broke silence. "We are come to a pretty pass in the present day !" said, he ; "for my part, I cannot see where it is all to end : nobody is contented with 'that state unto which it has pleased God to call them ;' everybody wants to be uppermost."

"Ah !" said Mrs. Pluffy to Courtney, by way of parenthesis, "the doctor has such a knowledge of Scripture."

The doctor was forced to take a fourth glass of wine before he could proceed. "Now, there is that Mr. Slender, my curate : he is not satisfied with his salary, though he knows very well that I could get twenty young men any day to do the duty for half the money,—or, indeed, for nothing ; there are always so many wanting titles. He little thinks what expenses I am at—what wages I am obliged to give my gardener, and my coachman, and, indeed, all my men-servants."

"Probably any one of them more than your curate;" said Courtney drily.

"More, sir! yes, a great deal more," said the doctor, "taking all their expenses into consideration. Indeed, they are much more difficult to get, and, in fact, much more depends upon them."

"Yes," said Courtney, "the body takes much more looking after than the soul."

"My coachman," continued Dr. Pluffy, "could soon cost me a curate's salary by neglecting or ill-treating my horses—horses like mine are valuable; I would not take three hundred guineas for my carriage-horses; and then, one's butler, to be trusted with the care of the plate, as well as the wine, in an establishment like mine, is no trifle; and one's gardener, too—he ought to be able to send up wall-fruit in winter; and all these things are to be thought of, and paid for."

"Oh, but you know, 'pa," said Miss Emily Eleonora, "people like Mr. Slender have no notion of such things. Why, only think, Mr. Courtney, his daughters actually cook, and keep the house nice and neat, all by themselves; and it is so comfortable, quite a little love of a place; but, only imagine how they must work to make it so nice!"

"They have nothing else to do," said Miss Pluffy; "they neither play, nor draw, nor model; they have no studies to attend to. I dare say they know no language but their own."

"Perhaps Mr. Slender is of Milton's opinion," said Courtney, "that one tongue is enough for a woman;"—and as he spoke he looked very much as if he could have added, "too much, sometimes."

"Luxuries do not always give happiness," said Miss Emily Eleonora, with a sigh; for she had lately become romantic, and had taken to enriching certain periodicals with 'The Lovelorn Minstrel,' 'The Brigand's Bride,' 'The Abandoned Fair One,' and other poetical contributions of the same *genre*. "I have really envied those girls sometimes, when I have seen them looking so contented and so pretty in their humble retreat."

"Pretty!" exclaimed Miss Pluffy. "La! Emily. Why, 'ma, do you think the Slenders pretty?"

"I think, my dear," said Mrs. Pluffy with exemplary candour, "they would have been very well if they had had

education ; or even, perhaps, they might be as they are, if they had any advantages in dress."

"But Margaret is so pale!" said Miss Plufly, who generally outblushed the peony.

Miss Emily Eleonora, whose complexion was somewhat cadaverous, observed that colour was not essential to beauty.

"Then, her forehead is so high," continued Miss Plufly—her own being remarkably low ; "and her eyes are too large. "I think Lucy is the prettiest, if either of them can be called pretty."

"Have I ever seen the demoiselles?" asked Courtney carelessly.

"Oh, if you have ever been at church at Creykedale, you have, no doubt," replied Miss Plufly ; "they are always to be seen in the pew opposite the reading-desk ; they have worn the same straw bonnets there for four years, to my knowledge."

"Great resolution on their parts," said Courtney. "I suppose the young ladies' bonnets and their father's coat are much of an age."

"He is a foolish man," said Doctor Plufly. "I should be glad to know what necessity there can be for him to be charitable : he gives away more than he has any business to do ; it is not expected from those who are poor themselves—indeed, it is not just ; but anybody that makes up a story of distress can get something out of him, as long as he has a halfpenny in his pocket. That is what I call ostentation. I never give to people I know nothing about ; though I believe I may say there is not a public charity in the county where my name may not be seen in the list of subscribers. That's the kind of charity I like, for then one knows where one's money goes to ; and, besides, it's giving a good example to the public."

"Yes, doctor ; but you are a public character," said Courtney, rising to take his leave.

The doctor bowed, wisely taking the speech as a compliment ; Courtney did the same, and after a few gallant nothings to the ladies, he departed, and turned his horse's head towards Creykedale. He was in hopes he might have overtaken the curate on the road ; though why he wished to do so he hardly knew ; but he thought, at any rate, he could

have apologized for the accident of the morning, and that would have served as a sort of introduction to him.

The poor pedestrian was not, however, in such good trim returning as he had been in coming ; instead of keeping the lead he had fallen into the rear ; indeed, to say the truth, he had stepped into a baker's shop to buy a roll, and having lingered there a few minutes to warm his hands, Courtney had unconsciously left him behind, whilst he kept urging his steed forward, wondering he did not overtake him ; so that he was obliged to go fairly through the village, without any other consolation for having come eight or nine miles out of his way than a momentary glance at two very pretty girls, who were sitting at work in a little bow-window, shaded with calico curtains of snowy whiteness, in an old-fashioned Elizabethan-looking dwelling, which, from its proximity to the church, and a certain air of neatness that characterized it, he concluded to be the parsonage ;—*ergo*, the lovely sempstresses, who were half hidden from observation by geraniums and balsams, were the curate's daughters.

And now to the poor curate himself. He shall give the history of the day in his own words, as he wrote it down when his children had gone to bed.

CHAPTER II.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

RECEIVED of Doctor Pluffy, the sum of twenty-five pounds, being my half-year's stipend, due the tenth of last month. I ought to have applied for it before, but it is always so painful to me to ask for money, and I thought it possible the doctor might, as he generally has done, send it—most likely it had escaped his memory. The morning was fine when I set off ; a brisk wind during the night had dried the causeway, which was very fortunate, for in a walk of eleven miles, a slip back every three or four steps makes a great deal of difference. The sun shone brightly ; a light hoar-frost had sprinkled the red berries of the hawthorn ; the air was bracing, and everything looked cheerful. I felt in good spirits, and full of hope. As I went along I repeated to myself, for the

hundredth time, the form of words in which I would ask the doctor to raise my salary ; I persuaded myself he would not object to so reasonable a request, after nineteen years' and four months' service on my part to his predecessor and himself ; and I pleased myself with the thought of getting winter gowns for my daughters, which, poor things, they greatly want ; and, perhaps a coat for myself, which I could have a bargain, as it has been worn a little time. Whilst I was indulging in these speculations, a dashing young fellow passed me at a full canter, and by a sudden start of his horse (a beautiful creature it was), splashed me from head to foot—it was unlucky, but he could not help it. The stockings which Margaret had sat up darning last night till eleven o'clock, and my coat which Lucy had brushed before I set out, so vigorously that I was forced to tell her to desist, or she would not leave a morsel of nap upon it, were covered with mud ; by dint, however, of scraping and rubbing, and letting it dry, and then rubbing again and scraping, I was tolerably presentable when I got to the Rectory—but it damped me. The doctor, moreover, was engaged "on business of importance," the footman said ; and this kept me waiting so long in a room without a fire that the healthy glow I had felt from my walk began to change to a cold fit that made my teeth chatter in my head. The groom was walking a fine blood-horse up and down before the window, with a cloth over it that it might not get chilled. I saw in a moment it was the same animal that had splashed me on the road, and I waited impatiently for the young man who had ridden it to make his appearance, as I imagined it must be he with whom the doctor was so particularly engaged. I was mistaken, however, for whilst I was yet anxiously watching the horse and groom, the bell rang, and the servant came to tell me that the doctor would see me. Alas ! my spirits and my courage had fled ; I was shown into the back drawing-room ; the doctor was seated in his large library chair ; the table near him was covered with books in splendid bindings, among which was a magnificent polyglot Bible in red morocco ; and a massive silver inkstand occupied the centre. I could not help looking at my shoes, for I was afraid they might dirty the carpet. I always feel oppressed in the presence of the

doctor, especially in his own house—he looks, to me, bigger there than anywhere else. He received me, I thought, with even less than his usual courtesy—it might be my fancy, or something might have discomposed him, for he appeared flushed; whatever it was, however, he did not ask me to sit down—in fact, he seemed in haste to get rid of me. He paid me my twenty-five pounds, counting it twice over, because he thought, the first time, he had given me a pound too much, took my receipt, and then looked at me as much as to say, “I believe there is nothing more to settle between us.” How my heart beat! my tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of my mouth, and my forehead was covered with a cold damp, which, nevertheless, relieved the faintness that was fast coming over me. “Is there anything else you wish to say, Mr. Slender?” inquired the doctor. The tone of his voice sounded a little more conciliatory than at first, and I took courage—for when I thought of my daughters, I reproached myself for my cowardice—to say that I wished to throw myself on his consideration, for some moderate addition to my salary, as, in the present state of things, I found it scarcely possible to live on so very small an income, with the decent appearance which it became a clergyman to make. In an instant I saw the helplessness of my appeal, and would have given half of what I had just received to have had the words back again. The doctor’s countenance clouded over, and became redder still, like the sun in a fog.

“So very small an income!” Mr. Slender, said he, throwing his head back, and elevating his eyebrows, and staring at me with such an expression of surprise as really put me out of countenance. “I don’t know what you mean! very odd language, I think, to use to *me*; *you* talk of appearances, I should be glad to know what appearances *you* have to keep up compared with *mine*—yes, sir, *mine*, which are incumbent and unavoidable. Sir, you don’t know what you are talking about. When I consider what claims I have upon me, I think I am extremely liberal; more so, indeed, than I ought to be, in giving you, of my own free will, a salary of fifty pounds a year, when I could get a dozen young men, before next Sunday, who would be thankful to do the duty for forty.”

"And I, sir," I replied, "should have been thankful, perhaps, for forty, when I was a young man, or even now, if I had not a family."

"Yours can scarcely be called a family, Mr. Slender; you have only two girls, I believe; no sons to maintain at college, as I have, at a great expense."

"True, sir, but my daughters are no longer children; they are fast approaching to womanhood. Margaret is eighteen, and Lucy ——" "That is all in your favour, Mr. Slender," interrupted the doctor; "they ought now to be able to get a living for themselves."

I was going to reply, but he arose. "Mr. Slender," said he, "I am particularly engaged to-day;" and, indeed, as he spoke I heard the clattering of knives and forks, and the young ladies laughing and talking to some visitors in the next room,—“and therefore I cannot enter, just now, into any further particulars respecting your affairs; indeed, it only rests with yourself to determine whether it will be agreeable to you” (*agreeable*, what a word!) “to do the duty of Creykedale for forty pounds per annum, or not—for I really do not, now that I come to consider the thing seriously, think it just to my family to give more. You will, if you please, give me your decision within the week, and I shall act accordingly.” He bowed as he spoke, and put his hand upon the bell. I bowed too, and departed; but I thought I could not have understood him aright, so terrible did his words sound in my ears. I was thunderstruck. I had always found him stately, and somewhat cold; but never before did I see him so haughty, so disdainful.

It must be “some enemy hath done this.” He did not even ask me to stay dinner, which he always used to do. I had counted on the invitation, for I had left home fasting; it was so early for my poor Margaret, I was unwilling she should leave her bed this cold weather before daylight, to prepare my breakfast. I was faint and weary, and had eight miles to go back; and the day, too, had changed, and a drizzling mist began to obscure all the country, which, at sunrise, had looked so cheerful and so pleasant. I bought a roll at a baker’s, at the end of the village, and ate it as I went along; but it was with difficulty I could get it down, for, when I thought of the future, my heart seemed to die within me.

Shame on thee, Thomas! Is it not that, like him whose name thou bearest, thou art weak of faith, and canst only believe what thou seest with thy carnal eyes? Hast thou not a Father who carest for thee in the heavens? Has not that Father said, "Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed?" Ah! let me be thankful for what remains to me. What if my rashness had lost me my office entirely! If it be as the doctor says, that so many could live respectably upon forty pounds a year, why, I must try and do the same, though it does not allow two shillings a day to feed and clothe three persons, besides fuel and little incidental expenses. But is there not the promise of Him who clothes the lilies of the field?—He who giveth "to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." And besides, perhaps we shall be able to retrench in some small matters. Alas! the doctor little thinks how hardly we live, even at present; if he did, surely he would not thus add to my anxieties for the future. "Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us; for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud."

CHAPTER III.

PARENTAL ADMONITIONS.

MR. SLENDER had, at least, the consolation, on his return home, of finding smiling faces and the kettle boiling. Margaret, his eldest daughter, who, with her sister Lucy, had already taken tea at one o'clock, as a succedaneum for something more substantial, now strove to give an additional relish to this second edition of the same, by remarking how refreshing it was.

Whilst the curate and his daughters were thus contented to sip the cups

"Which cheer, but not inebriate,"

Dr. Plufty was sticking his fork under the wing of a pheasant that had succeeded the giblet soup, the fish, and the saddle of mutton; his better half was at the same time claiming preference for a dish of macaroni, *au gratin*; and Miss

Emily Eleonora, with an abstracted air, was sentimentally facilitating the union, sanctioned from time immemorial by the wise, of hot apple tart and custard. The family party had received an addition since the morning; it was, however, only the family addition of the son and heir, who had turned his horse's head from Trinity towards Gormanton, on the speculation of gaining a still more famous appetite than that for which he was famous already.

The substantials, the relishes sweet and savoury, and the *finale* of cheese and celery, being despatched in due rotation, the appearance of the dessert served as a signal for the commencement of the ephemeral topics which had been interrupted by the analysis of more solid things.

"And so Clement Courtney called this morning," said the incipient Reverend Augustus Middleton Plumtree Plufly.

"Yes; and he stayed so long—indeed, he generally does," returned Mrs. Plufly, looking complacently towards her eldest daughter,—“that he was afraid he should scarcely be back in time for dinner at Thornton Hall.”

"Then, sure enough, his fears were rightly founded," rejoined her son, "for I met him myself, not two hours ago, in an exactly opposite direction, viz., going to Barnwell."

"To Barnwell? How very odd!—when he said he was in such a hurry?" exclaimed Miss Plufly.

"How very mysterious!" exclaimed Miss Emily Eleonora.

"How very improper!" remarked Mrs. Plufly.

"It is not at all odd," said Mr. Augustus Middleton Plumtree Plufly, "for the players are there, and some con-founded pretty girls there are among them: there is a little vixen of a Jewess, that plays tragedy—it would do your heart good to see her stab herself in "Roxalana;"—and as to its being mysterious, Miss Emily, Courtney, at any rate, makes no mystery of it, for he goes to Barnwell every day of his life, and sometimes three times a day; I have met him on the road as often myself."

"Then you must have been going there as often, by your own account," said Doctor Plufly, "and that, you must allow, is not very proper—for you, at any rate; it is nothing very creditable even to Mr. Courtney, who is a man of large independent fortune; in you, Augustus, who have your fortune to make, it is the height of imprudence."

"I stand corrected," said the representative elect, with an air of the utmost deference ; for he had certain bills in his pocket, for the receipts to which he had to rely on his father's good humour.

"Nay, my dear boy," said the doctor, "I do not want to be hard upon you. I do not look for old heads upon young shoulders ; but it is my duty to tell you, as a parent, and as a person of no inconsiderable degree of weight, that we of the Established Church live in argumentative and disputatious times, when our comforts are looked upon with an evil and grudging eye, our rights contested, and even our usefulness disputed ; therefore it is doubly incumbent on us to keep up appearances, and give no room for the criticisms of the illiberal, or the *liberal*, as the demagogical fault-finders of the present day arrogantly choose to style themselves."

"I understand, sir—'assume a virtue though you have it not ;' that's just what Shirley says so well in 'Hamlet : ' and, by-the-by, he does that part capitally ; he would be as great in it as Macready if he would not be so pedantic, and persist in playing it in such an abominably rusty suit, pieced, too, at the elbows, because he will have it, forsooth, that as Shakspeare makes the Prince of Denmark speak of his *customary* suit of solemn black, it could not be a new suit,—nay, most probably was absolutely an old one, from his holding, on account of 'his weakness and his melancholy,' but little intercourse with his tailor."

"I dare say Mr. Shirley has very good reasons for his commentary," said the doctor, seizing the finest bunch of grapes on the plate, and then politely handing the remainder to his wife ; "but, remember, Augustus, you have two very important duties to perform in society—that of the gentleman, and that of the divine ; and it is incumbent on you not to compromise either the one or the other by any of your outward actions or associates. The world, Augustus, will judge of you by your connections and your success ; and if you do not get forward you will only have yourself to blame, for you must do me the justice to acknowledge that I have always given you the best advice, and never set you any bad example of familiarity with inferiors."

"Nor am I familiar with them, sir," said Augustus, "if by inferiors you mean decidedly vulgar people—snobs, like

farmers' sons, and shopkeepers, or would-be gentlemen on small means ; but some people are privileged from the nature of their pursuits—a bang-up bruiser, for instance ; we all know the first peer of the realm will talk with him, walk with him, and dine with him, and clap him on the back ; and a player, too, has generally something taking, something of the gentleman about him,—a good one, I mean, like Shirley ; he could not act Ranger so well as he does if he had not."

"So much the worse," said Doctor Pluffy ; "it makes him all the more dangerous companion ; an unprofitable one he is sure to be : it is not by such intimacies, Augustus, you can ever hope to get on in the Church ; you ought, at your time of life, to be looking to the future ; you ought to study the characters of the young noblemen about you, and pin yourself to the sleeve of some one or other of them, who may have it in his power to give you a lift in the way of preferment ; you should fall into his views, and adopt his tastes, and make yourself first agreeable, and gradually necessary to him. There's Lord Orville, for instance, you know his father, the Earl of Maltravers, is an influential man ; now, if you were to study him thoroughly, and play your cards well, I might be Dean of E— one day or other ; and I fancy you would all think that a very pretty thing."

"I have studied him, and tried him, too," said Augustus, "and for a term or two we got on very well together ; but he was quite altered in the long vacation ; he cut us all when he came back ; and it's singular enough that his most intimate associate, just now, *sub rosa*, is this very Shirley you are angry with me for being acquainted with."

"Why as to that, I am not positively angry," said the doctor, in a softened tone, "I only advise you to be cautious, my dear boy ; but if Lord Orville be really intimate with the young man, he must, as you say, be respectable—that is, he must have something of the gentleman about him,—and it is extraordinary the influence such sort of people sometimes acquire over their betters."

"I am sure Shirley has great influence over Lord Orville," said Augustus : "indeed, I think sometimes he must be something more than he appears to be, or Orville never would be going to him at all hours as he does."

"Is this Mr. Shirley married ?" asked Mrs. Pluffy.

"I believe he is, but I do not know exactly ; at any rate, his wife does not act."

"Well, my son," said Dr. Plufly, "I do not wish to cast any unnecessary restraint upon you, I trust you have prudence enough to keep yourself out of mischief ; and as to Lord Orville, it will be as well for you not to talk about his intimacy with this Mr. Shirley, for some people might think that if I was aware of it I ought to give the Vice-Chancellor some intimation of the matter."

"Oh, no, pray don't, then, talk about it, Augustus," exclaimed Miss Emily Eleonora ; "for the players will, perhaps, be sent away if you do, and I want to see the 'Bride of Abydos,' and I should like to see Mr. Shirley too—what kind of a looking young man is he ?—has he dark eyes ? is he tall ?"

"You promised to bring Lord Orville here, Augustus," interrupted Miss Plufly, in a reproachful tone, "and you never have."

"Yes, it is thoughtless of you not to bring him," said Mrs. Plufly, "it might be an advantage to your sisters."

"It is not for want of thought," the Cantab replied, somewhat testily. "I have asked him often enough, but I tell you he has shut himself up all this term, and goes nowhere."

And so saying he rose to ring for his horse. The ladies adjourned to the drawing-room, and the doctor resigned himself to his accustomed "sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL

CERTAINLY my Margaret is an angel !—her mind is yet more lovely than her body—I am not worthy to be her father. Young as she is, she is more truly wise, and much more really religious than I am. I had not the resolution, last night, to tell my daughters of the unfortunate result of my day's expedition : this morning I took courage to break it to them. At first my Margaret's countenance was sad-

dened, but it recovered its serenity in a few minutes, and she said, in a tone of voice which vibrated to my heart, it sounded so like her dear mother's, "I am afraid it made you very unhappy, my dear father, did it not?"

"It did, my Margaret, but I must bear it."

"You must, and I know you will bear it as you ought;" and she looked in my face with such an earnest and entreating expression, that I felt ashamed at her setting me the example of fortitude, in place of my giving it to her. "I hope I shall, my dear child," I replied, "but I own I shrink from the prospect of our miseries and anxieties—I know not how we shall be able to exist. We are already in want of almost everything, and in debt into the bargain; and now, with the deduction of one-fifth of my poor stipend, we shall scarcely be able to procure the actual necessities of life. Alas! where can we look for support under such an unexpected trial?"

"There! my dear father," she said, pointing upwards, and looking like a seraph.

My lively little Lucy ran to me, at these words, and seating herself on my knee, threw her arms round my neck, and kissed me. "I have something to tell you," said she: "I dreamed last night that it was New-Year's Day, and that the king came to see us here at Creykedale, in this very house—only think what an honour! He got off his horse, and walked right in, and said he was come to dine with us;—you may well laugh—you may think we were in a fine taking at having nothing to offer him, but he said he had brought plenty of good things with him; then I thought they were all brought in upon golden dishes, and the trumpets played all the while in the streets—it was so grand! But now comes the best of all. I thought they brought in a fine velvet cap for you, papa, for a new-year's gift; it was such an odd shape, high and pointed, like the bishop's in Gough's great book of 'Sepulchral Monuments.' The king put it on your head himself, and you looked so droll in it, I could not help bursting out a-laughing, and then Margaret was angry with me, and that vexed me so that I awoke—and now, papa, is it not a very odd dream? I am sure something lucky will happen from it."

"Dreams, Lucy," said I, "are delusions."—"Nay, but

papa," said she, "sometimes they come from heaven, we read of them in the Bible."

I had no answer to make to this remark ; indeed, I am not without faith myself in dreams. This Lucy's I insert in my journal because it may be intended, in the mercy of the Giver of all good, as a consolation to me under my present circumstances ; and as such I receive it. It would indeed be remarkable if any fortunate event should occur to us by New-Year's Day ! Certainly much less than a visit from the king, or a bishop's mitre would suffice to make us happy.

I have been very busy all the day with my accounts. It is well for me I was not brought up to commerce, for I cannot bear figures. All my debts are now paid, thank God ! except the bill with the grocer : I doubt not he will wait for a little longer, for when Margaret went to speak to him a fortnight since, he told her he should be sorry if she made herself uneasy about it. I have paid the butcher five pounds, being his account from last February—ten months,—it is not out of the way for three persons ; the baker, four pounds for six months ; three pounds for coals, nearly burnt out, I am sorry to say ; two pounds for the shoemaker, his last year's bill—I wish I could make my own, it would be amusing in the winter evenings ; five shillings to the brewer, for a cask of small beer ; fifteen to the linen-draper ; two shillings for stationery ; and two more for my share of the *Cambridge Chronicle*, which comes to two-pence per week ; making in the total fifteen pounds four shillings ; there remain, then, out of the twenty-five I received the day before yesterday only nine pounds sixteen shillings.

It is vain now for me to think of the coat, and yet I have great need of it ; to be sure it is not new, but it is very respectable ; perhaps, however, Goosegab will let me have it, a few months hence, at the same price, if he does not find a purchaser for it meanwhile. My poor Margaret has still more need of a gown than I have of a coat ; my heart aches when I see her, poor child, going about the house in a gingham frock this piercing weather. Lucy is better off, for her sister robs herself of her best things for her, under pretence that they are too small for herself.

Certainly I ought to give up the newspaper—this vexes

me; it is such a treat to have it at my own fireside on a Saturday evening. Creykedale is so out of the way of everything that is passing;—not that I care for that, as far as concerns myself, but, as Cowper says—

“’Tis pleasant, through the loophole of retreat,
To look upon this Babel of a world,”

particularly in such stirring times as these. I shall never now hear how the poor Poles go on. Last Newmarket races Lord Squanderpelf, who had only come of age the week before, lost five thousand pounds to the Marquis of Holdfast, who is reckoned the richest man now on the turf. It is curious to see how exactly the words of Scripture, taken in a more literal sense, may be applied to things of this world. “To him that hath shall be given.” Here is a man with a hundred thousand a year, and he gains five thousand pounds in five minutes; here am I, with fifty pounds a year, and, in the twinkling of an eye, I am deprived of one-fifth of my whole income. “From him that hath little, shall be taken away even that which he hath.” But what a base and low interpretation am I putting on holy things! Shame on me—shame on me, thus to give way so soon again to a murmuring spirit! I fear there is something more in my heart than I have yet searched out, at the bottom of all this fretfulness and caring for trifles. I fear resentment against Doctor Pluffy lurks within, and causes the irritation of feeling which takes many shapes, because I dare not look steadily upon it in its own native and undisguised deformity. Alas! the human heart is indeed “deceitful and desperately wicked,” and has marvellous facilities of hiding its evils even from itself. How easy it is to ask, as we daily do, to be forgiven, even as we forgive! How difficult to show a millionth part of that entire forgiveness of others which we require for ourselves, without which we must inevitably be lost! Of all the infinite perfection of virtues exhibited by our Blessed Lord, during the manifestation of Himself in the human nature, none appears to me more decisive of the fulness of His divinity than His compassionate and entire forgiveness of His bitterest enemies in the very moment of His direst sufferings. How sinful—how contemptible appear all worldly resentments and strifes when we reflect upon this

awful theme ! "Rest in the Lord, O my soul, and wait patiently for Him. Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way ; because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath ; fret not thyself in any way to do evil."

CHAPTER V.

A SCENE AT THE "ROEBUCK."

SHENSTONE was very right when he taught his unaffected muse to sing the praises of an inn :—

"Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round,
And all its various stages been,
May sigh to think how oft he's found
His warmest welcome at an inn."

But in Shenstone's time an inn was the abode of freedom and comfort. The thing is changed of late, even to the name. There are no *inns* now, barring the inns of court ; with which, somehow or other, one generally has an awkward association, exactly the opposite of either freedom or comfort. In this age of refinement all your inns are *hotels*—very different things, and not one half so pleasant. The apartments may be more spacious, more finely furnished, and further removed from the bar, the kitchen, the stables ; but to your real lover of an *inn*, they are not one whit the better for that. The pleasure of an inn is in the proximity to everything, and the mixture of everything. A nice-looking bar, with a nice-looking woman behind it, peeping out from among her shining cups and saucers, her glasses and punch-bowls surmounted with lemons, like the wax doll in a Christmas show ; the jolly cook stewing away in the kitchen, waving her frying-pan in one hand, her gridiron in the other, carrying on half a dozen culinary operations at once, affording to the olfactories of the passers-by a most appetizing anticipation of the savoury result of her complicated labours ; the bustle of the stable-yard, where, by half a dozen steps from his little parlour, the prudent traveller might ascertain the important fact that his horse was dining before he sat down to dinner himself ; the variety of calls and answers,

and questions and rejoinders, and the orders for Tom the waiter, and John the ostler, and Jenny the chambermaid; it was all these, and the ins and outs, and endless gossip resounding through the house, that afforded perpetual stimulus to enlivening conjecture, effectually preventing the intrusion of unpleasing recollections, and vigorously putting to flight that nine-times-dipped blue-devil *ennui*, which, with all due deference be it spoken, reigns triumphant and undisputed in your regularly fashionable hotel. Then there is the quacking of the ducks—for a sort of little farm-yard is an indispensable accompaniment to your country inn,—and the cackling of the geese, and the clucking of the hens, and the braggadocio crowing of the cock, and the lordly gobble of the turkey-cock,—his wattles alternately waxing red and white with anger as he eyes the *arrivals*, with look askance, and sweeps the ground, with outstretched wings, in portentous circles, narrowing them at the nearer approach of an inquisitive stranger. Then, returning to the fireside, there is the "delightful task" of beginning the moments of "pleasing expectation" between the laying of the cloth and the entrance of dinner, by a voyage round the room, and making acquaintance, in the course of it, with "The Four Seasons," or "The Four Quarters of the Globe," or "The Portrait of Eclipse," or of "The Durham Ox," or haply of the landlady herself, smiling complacently with a book in her hand, and her eyes instinctively turned towards the door; then that door opening, and the selfsame landlady coming in, bearing, with good old-fashioned English civility, herself the first dish, to wit, the boiled fowls; the fat, red-faced waiter waddling after her with the invariable accompaniments of a piece of ham and a dish of greens; then the exchange of compliments, the order for a bottle of wine diffusing radiance over the countenance of the lady, and imparting to the bosom of the gentleman all the soothing sensations attendant upon the good deeds that "bring their own reward."

Talk of a rainy day at an inn, indeed, as one of the miseries of human life! I should be glad to learn where is the misery of having an excuse to yourself one single day, perhaps the only one in the three hundred and sixty-five of the whole year, for being most comfortably and gloriously idle,

and drinking in, at your quiet leisure, the full truth of Italy's luxurious maxim—

"Bella cosa far niente,"—

with the privilege of ringing the bell every half-hour, to be answered with real alacrity by the jolly waiter, whose respect for you increases every time he is summoned ; to stir the fire every five minutes without troubling your head about the price of coals or the state of the coal-cellar ; to have the best possible construction put upon all your looks, actions, and commands ; to feel yourself in good humour with everybody, and everybody in good humour with you ; to anticipate, every time you hear the twanging horn—for we are speaking of the days of England's pride in her four-horse coaches,—the appearance of some conversable stranger, who may be equally delighted to meet unexpectedly with a social companion, when he had not indulged the slightest hope of finding a soul to sympathize with him in his wet coat, or bear him company in a glass of hot negus and the newspaper. The pleasure, meanwhile, of sending your compliments to the landlady, requesting the loan of a book, and receiving, with her compliments, in return, an almanack for the year 1717, "The Grazier's Companion ; or, the Art of measuring your own Fat," and an odd volume of "The Town and Country Magazine." Then you fall into a delicious doldrum, half asleep and half awake, with your feet on the fender, the tea-things at your elbow, and your eyes wandering over the portraits, in the magazine, of belles and beaux, in the *tête-à-têtes* with their high heads, and *ailes de pigeon*, all laid at rest a century ago ; then, as it draws towards "the witching time of night," you horrify yourself with the story of Sir Theophilus Broughton, poisoned by his brother-in-law with laurel-water, or of Robert the Hermit, murdered by Eugene Aram, until you think it high time to fortify yourself with a glass of brandy-and-water, and walk up-stairs to bed, where the goodnatured chambermaid waits your bidding with a pan of hot coals, and a tattered volume of Baxter's "Saints' Everlasting Rest" laid upon your dressing-table invites you to take it to your pillow to compose yourself to sleep.

But these days are passed and gone with

"The years beyond the flood."

Now, instead of being welcomed at every stage, like an old acquaintance, chatting with the landlady whilst the horses were changing, or walking round the town, and reading all the epitaphs in the churchyard whilst dinner was getting ready, we are whirled in a hand-gallop over macadamized roads, or steamed at fifty miles per hour along iron railways and through tenebrious tunnels, that bring us to the end of our journey in less time than it would formerly have taken to get to the first turnpike. Then, when you are arrived at your destined *hotel*, you are ushered into rooms as isolated, as cold and formal as perchance your own drawing-room may be, there to sit down, in solemn state and silence, to a meal of morsels, served up on plate, forsooth, and superintended by a fashionably-dressed coxcomb in white gloves and *choker*, who stands staring in your face whilst he orders his deputy to change your plate, and to whom you dare not address a word, even of the commonest inquiry, for fear of committing yourself in his eyes as vulgar. It is amidst this affectation of aristocratic elegance, not rendered more palatable by the consciousness that you are to pay an aristocratic price for it, that you feel all the dulness and discomfort of being away from all your own social circle, without the smallest sympathy between the obliher and the obliged, insomuch as of the principals you see nothing, and their representatives, the waiters, are far too fine gentlemen to suffer a muscle in their countenances to betray whether you have surpassed or fallen short of their expectations with regard to the operation expressively termed by the French, greasing their *pattes*.

There is, however, still to be found here and there in once "merrie England" a small market-town or a village whose inhabitants are aware of the existence of railroads only by hearsay. In them we may still behold the neat red-brick house, two stories high, a bow-window room on each side of the door, the bar full front on entering, and the appurtenances of kitchen, stable, farm-yard, and garden with peas, beans, and cabbages, roses, hollyhocks, and southernwood, all within sight, and easy of approach. Such was the "Roebuck" at Creykedale, with the additional advantage of being exactly opposite the blacksmith's forge and the apothecary's shop, in consequence of which united attractions, any stranger who

might take his "patient stand" at the window for a single morning, would be pretty certain of seeing in that time every inhabitant of the place, genteel and ungentleel, eventually pass in review before him.

The "Roebuck" itself was a very tolerable animal, considering that the artist had never seen one. The landlady was still better: she had been handsome in her youth, and retained enough of her pristine beauty in the autumn of life not to begrudge those who were in their spring, whatever claim they might wish to set up to admiration on the same score. She was kind in all her first impulses, wary in her second, and generally shifted round to kindness again as soon as she had satisfied her conscience that she was not to be imposed upon, and convinced her neighbours that she could see as far into a millstone as most folks.

She had a daughter, of whom, perhaps, she was not less fond for people saying "She was very well, but would never be so handsome as her mother;" and a husband, who was such a "quiet man," to use her own somewhat obscure eulogium on him, that many pretty regular customers did not even know she had any husband at all, insomuch that his being taken for a visitor was a joke to which she was much accustomed, and appeared most heartily to enjoy. Not but what Mr. Greensides had his uses—what, indeed, in nature has not? He was an excellent hand at tapping a barrel, and a very competent judge of its quality; he was an oracle as to the weather, and could hear the trot of a horse a mile off. It was this last peculiarity that enabled him to announce to his wife one fine morning, as she was bustling about with a duster in her hand, the approach of a customer long before he came in sight. "I guess he is from Cambridge," said the quiet man, turning from the door to resume his place in the chimney corner, the transit between those stations generally forming the limit of his walks to and fro, which made up by repetition what they wanted in extent.

"I hope he may be," said Mrs. Greensides. "Run, Betty, my girl; put the poker into the fire in the best parlour, and just give your table a bit of a wipe with your apron, and get your tray ready, so that you can whip it in in a jiffy; very likely the young gentleman will be for having a broiled

pigeon, or a kidney, or a morsel of ham, or some little savoury thing or other ; they are always so fond of a bit of relish, them young gentlemen."

Whilst Mrs. Greensides thus promulgated her orders, the *gentleman* rode up to the door, gave his horse to the ostler, who had come forth instinctively at the sound of hoofs, and walked in.

Mrs. Greensides' countenance rather fell at the sight of a very shabby great-coat, and boots too big for the wearer, and conspicuously mended into the bargain ; nevertheless, though he did not look the man for a broiled pigeon and a pint of sherry, yet a mouthful of bread-and-cheese and a glass of ale would be eightpence, and eightpence was not to be despised ; and then his horse would be to pay for the same as another's ; so he received a smile and a curtesy in answer to his bow, and Betty was ordered to show him into the *other* parlour—a prudent way of designating, without giving offence, that which was not the best. So in he went, but had no sooner laid his hat down, than he was out again at the landlady's elbow, having, as he said, "a mighty predilection for *the bar*."

"It is a cold, raw day, sir," said the landlady ; "would you like to take something ?—a glass of hot ale with a little sugar and ginger ; or mulled, with an egg ?"

The stranger declined for the present ; and the landlady concluded within herself that her husband had been mistaken in supposing the traveller was a Cambridge man.

"Perhaps you would like a bit of dinner first, sir ? We've got a fine piece of cold roast beef, scarcely touched, can be put on the table in a minute ; or, if you like something hot better, you can have a nice rasher of bacon and an egg ; or," with a little hesitation, "a mutton chop, or a veal cutlet, we could, perhaps, get."

"Thank you, madam, nothing at all for the present," said the stranger. "I came to this place on business ; I should like to get that settled before I give in to any minor considerations. Perhaps you can help me in it a little."

"I shall be very willing, sir ; or if my husband——"

"Well, then, to come to it at once, do you think I could get a bespeak here ?"

"Oh yes, sir, to be sure ; anything you like, sir. You

wish, perhaps, to bespeak a bed?—Betty, look to them there sheets in the press, and hang them to the fire;—or, perhaps, sir, it is a dinner you would bespeak?"

"Not just now. I mean, do you think this is a place likely to give me a benefit?"

Mrs. Greensides looked somewhat anxiously towards the tray, wherein four knives and forks were balanced by four silver spoons; but she had too much delicacy to draw the said tray nearer to herself till she could think of some excuse for so doing. Nevertheless, she resolved not to press the subject of the dinner any further, feeling a benefit to herself therefrom to be quite out of the question.

"You seem surprised, madam," resumed the knight of the sock or buskin—for to one or other it might now be plainly conjectured that he belonged,—“but I am looking round in the way of my profession to enlarge the sphere of my usefulness, and I thought that if the good people hereabouts were fond of theatricals——”

"Oh dear, no, sir!" interrupted the landlady, all her worst suspicions confirmed by this open avowal in the *gentleman* of the nature of his professional pursuits; "that I am very sure they are not: no, they are a very respectable, decent, pious-minded people—very virtuous, too; though I say it that shouldn't say it."

"They may be as virtuous as they please, and yet no enemies, I presume, to a little rational recreation."

"Oh no, sir, I don't mean to say that they never recreate themselves in a rational way: they come here a good deal of an evening; and then there's Mr. Straightlocks, the Methodist preacher, a good many goes to hear him, for it's a very comfortable chapel, as warm as this here bar; and he is a very edifying man, and comes here himself pretty often—indeed, I call that arm-chair there, with the cushion, his place, and I am always glad to see him in it; for, as he says, right enough, it's his duty to set people a good example, not to take too much, nor talk improper; but as to giving anybody a benefit, I'm sure he would think it a very sacrilegious thing; and I don't think, sir, you would find it answer, at all—I don't."

"I am more hopeful, perhaps, than you are," said the

young man, his countenance brightening as he spoke, "an ancient philosopher says, wherever there is room for a man, there is room for a benefit ; and I am of his opinion."

"But, perhaps, sir, the gentleman was not a Christian," Mrs. Greensides respectfully suggested ; "indeed, I don't see how them ancients could be."

"But you have another minister in the place, as well as this Mr. Straightlocks, I believe ; perhaps he may be more liberal in his notions."

"What, Mr. Slender, our curate ? Why, yes, poor gentleman, he would be as liberal as anybody, sure enough, if he had anything to be liberal with ; but, bless your heart, he has scarcely a sixpence for himself. I'm sure it often makes my heart ache to see him walking past our door, with his daughters, nice pretty young ladies ; poor things, they work as hard as any servant, harder, I'm sure, than mine does. — You Betty, don't stand there, gaping out o' door ; you've plenty to do, if you would but stir yourself and set about it."

"Shall I have any chance of seeing Mr. Slender here, if I stay the evening ?" asked the stranger.

"Here, sir ! that you won't ; he used to come a time by chance, with company, to have a bottle of wine, but not above two or three times in five or six years ; and it's many a day since he has had anything of friends or acquaintance, like, calling on him. Sometimes, in winter, he sends for a little ale ; his daughters persuade him to have it, when he gets home cold and wet, for he goes about in all weathers to visit the poor and the sick, that he does ; but he never sets his foot within our doors except on a matter of business."

"Well, then, I will send and ask him to come on my business ; perhaps he will give me his influence."

"Why as to that, poor gentleman, he would give anything he had to give, and nobody can give what they have not got."

The most acute wrangler in Cambridge could not have refuted this truism, and the stranger, requesting pen, ink, and paper, stepped back into the *other* parlour, and speedily reappeared with a note for Mr. Slender, which note he desired the landlady to send immediately to him, with Mr. Shirley's compliments.

"And, by the by, when boots takes the note, he can just leave a bill or two at the blacksmith's, and any other respectable place he can think of," added the itinerant, with a *nonchalant* air; "I happen to have a few in my pocket." And so saying, he pulled out about a dozen bills of fare—to wit, "The Tragedy of Macbeth"—the part of *Macbeth* by Mr. Shirley; with the farce of "Raising the Wind"—the part of *Jeremy Diddler* by Mr. Shirley; with the further announcement at the foot, of "The Road to Ruin," "Wild Oats," "Fortune's Frolic," and various other edifying performances, in all of which the name of Mr. Shirley still stood pre-eminent, as the representative of the hero of the piece.

It should seem that this said Mr. Shirley had made use of some very powerful argument in his note to Mr. Slender, as that worthy man, in less than ten minutes after its delivery, was at the bar of the "Roebuck," inquiring for the writer.

"I believe the gentleman's name is Shirley?"

"Yes, it's here in the bill," said Miss Nancy, who had read it over and over again. Mr. Slender, however, only annexed one idea to a bill, and that was something to pay. He therefore did not even glance his eye towards the extended paper, but walked straight into the parlour—where was ensconced the stranger,—and shut the door.

Both Mrs. Greensides and her daughter had very quick ears, and the major part of their customers had very loud voices; the shutting the door, therefore, was, in general, a mere ceremony, as far as keeping any conversation secret might be concerned; but now it promoted that end so effectually that of all that passed between Mr. Slender and Mr. Shirley, nothing could Mrs. Greensides or Miss Nancy make out but, "unfortunate circumstance," "unexpected reverses," in the voice of the one; and "concern," and "sorrow," and "inability," in that of the other.

"I am sure he is a gentleman in disguise," said Miss Nancy.

"A gentleman!—a fiddlestick," responded her mother; "I saw what he was, as soon as he came into the house."

"I wish he may stay over to-night!" exclaimed Miss Nancy; "perhaps he would repeat us some speeches, or sing

us some songs ; I'm sure he would, if you asked him, mother ; he looks very good-natured."

"Well, child, we'll see ; I like a song myself, at right times ; but I hope he won't stay—if he does, however, I'll ask him to sing

'Twas in the good ship Rover
I sailed the world around ;'

—or else, *

'Said a smile to a tear,
On the cheek of my dear ;'

—they are either of them nice songs."

"I think I like, 'Said a smile to a tear,' the best," said Miss Nancy, "it sounds so pretty."

At that moment the door opened, and Mr. Slender came forth, attended to the door by the stranger, with whom he shook hands at parting, saying, in a low voice, "If I can any way do it, you shall hear from me directly. At any rate, I'll let you know one way or the other ;" then, with a friendly nod, and "good morning," to the landlady and her daughter, the curate set off in a homeward direction, in the rifle-trot pace to which we have already seen he was always impelled when his mind was employed on any subject that particularly interested him.

Mr. Shirley, meanwhile, retreated once more "behind the oak ;" and Mrs. Greensides said, in an under-tone, to her husband, who was now gradually advancing on his way from the fire-place to the street door,—

"Why, surely, my dear, Mr. Slender can never have been so foolish, as for him to go and countenance this here young man in bringing the player-people here."

"I never knew him do anything foolish," replied her husband.

"But wouldn't it be foolish ?" continued Mrs. Greensides, "didn't the last players as were here get into debt with everybody, and with us among the rest ?—and wasn't they obliged to stay, poor creatures, week after week, because they hadn't shoes for to go away in ?—didn't that Miss, I forget her name, as played *Cora* in 'Pizarro,' when they throwed a real baby over a rock—didn't she use to walk about in white satin slippers, in all weathers, because she hadn't any

else to put on her feet?—and didn't that poor man that used to sing—

‘This life is like a country dance,
The world a spacious ball-room,
Where everybody takes a prance,
There scarcely is for all room;’

—didn't he, that made us all fit to die with laughing when he held out his coat-laps like dancing a minuet—don't you remember, my dear, you laughed yourself, you know, a long while after it was all over ——”

“I remember the people laughing, and I believe I might laugh myself.”

“Well, didn't it make one's heart bleed to see this very man, that made us all nearly die with laughing—to see him, I say, come here night after night, and sit in the chimney corner, just as you do, Mr. Greensides, without saying a word, and ordering nothing, hour after hour, without either biting or supping—not that you are as bad as that, my dear.”

“No, thank goodness, not yet ;—Betty, draw me a glass of ale.”

“And didn't he at last die outright of starvation, poor creature, when we never expected nothing of the kind ; leaning his head upon his hand, poor creature, and going into his last sleep like a baby, poor hungered innocent ! Didn't the doctor say that he hadn't eaten a morsel for a week ? Oh, dear ! that a Christian should come to such an end ! and within the walls of this here “Roebuck” too ! I can't abide to think of it ; I may well dread sight of a player.—Mix me a little drop of brandy-and-water, Nancy, it makes me ill to think of it.”

“I will mix it for you, my dear,” said Mr. Greensides, rising with unusual alacrity ; “we will have a little together ; it'll do neither of us any harm.”

Just as the loving couple were taking the “cordial drop” that in their cup was thrown, not “to make the bitter draught of life go down,” but to give it an additional zest—for, be it known to those who may be contemplating matrimony, that a quiet man and a good bustling sort of woman make a very comfortable pair in the long run ; just then, as they were thus consoling themselves, a young lady, not by any means so smartly dressed as Miss Nancy, stepped

timidly up to the bar, and, after paying the usual salutations of the moment to the trio it at that moment contained, inquired, with a deep blush, which her large straw bonnet could not entirely conceal, for a gentleman—a stranger; his name, she believed, was Shirley. She was shown into the parlour; the door was closed, but, alas! the conversation was carried on in a lower key than ever; happily, however, for Miss Nancy, who was enduring all the pangs of curiosity and suspense, it was short—she had scarcely time to say, "Well, how very queer that Mr. Slender should send his daughter to this young man! What can she have to say to him, all alone by themselves?" and for her mother to reply, "Nay, as for me, I cannot guess any more than the man in the moon; but it will make them a deal of enemies if they at all help to bring the players here," when the door was opened by Mr. Shirley with an air of most profound respect, and Margaret Slender, turning to make her parting curtsy, lifted up her eyes, on the long lashes of which hung something that glittered like dew-drops; one might have sworn they had been tears, but such a supposition was at variance with the smile on her lip, and a glow of something the very opposite of sorrow that irradiated her whole countenance. She looked very like an angel; at least so Mr. Shirley seemed to think, for he looked after her as long as he could, and then heaved a sigh, returned to the parlour, and, after walking up and down for half an hour, rang the bell, and desired to be shown into a room where he could dress. Dress! why he had nothing with him. Betty, however, conducted him up-stairs, noted to him that there were two towels in the room, ascertained that there were no sheets upon the bed, and taking his pieced boots down to clean, left him to adorn himself as he might best be able.

In ten minutes he descended, divested of his shabby great-coat, and altogether considerably improved in his appearance; he bowed to his hostess *en passant*, smiled at Miss Nancy, so as to show an excellent set of teeth, remarked to the man of few words that it did not look unlike rain, to which the reply was, "We shall have it before to-morrow," asked the way to the parsonage, and set off in the direction intimated.

Why is a story like a chameleon? Now, if that is not a

good conundrum, I do not know what is ; yet, like many other good things, it may not be understood without an explanation. A story then—be attentive, gentle reader ; for I observe you always begin to think of something else the moment I introduce a moral reflection, or a sentimental feeling, or a poetical description, or a metaphysical—where was I ? Oh ! concerning the chameleon : a story is like a chameleon because it lives upon air—very good ; but it is like a chameleon for another reason, because it changes colour a dozen times a day. The colour of a story depends upon the imagination of the story-teller. Now, if we were to take our idea of Mr. Shirley solely from mine hostess of the “Roebuck,” we should, at any rate, only have a notion of one side of the question, and I like to view a thing on all sides ; therefore we will leave the lady at the bar to talk the matter over with her daughter, for her husband never commented on the customers, and we will take a peep into the “Curate’s Journal,” and see what kind of figure Mr. Shirley makes there.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

I HAVE just received a note from a stranger at the “Roebuck,” requesting to see me on a matter of importance. This is a very unusual occurrence with me. Lucy, however, will not let me go till she has brushed my hat and coat for the occasion.

I have been to the “Roebuck” and seen the stranger,—a fine young man of five or six-and-twenty, with a prepossessing countenance, though it seemed to me marked with more anxiety than belongs to his age. He is evidently better gifted by nature than fortune ; he had on a great-coat, boots much too large for him, and patched into the bargain ; his address, however, was so perfectly polished, and his self-possession so complete, that as soon as he began to speak I thought no more of his outward garb. After many apologies

for the liberty he had taken in sending for me, he informed me that he had been induced to do so in consequence of the painful position in which he found himself; and here the poor man hesitated, and turned away his head. I exhorted him not to be cast down, but to tell me exactly how he was situated.

"In the first place," said he, "I must tell you that my name is—" he hesitated a little, as if unwilling to say it—"is Shirley, and that I am by profession a player."

I believe the young man saw something like disappointment in my countenance on this information, and he said very humbly, "Perhaps, sir, you have a prejudice against theatricals?"

"If I had," I replied, "that would not prejudice me against you."

He bowed, and went on—"You will not, perhaps, be surprised when I tell you that I am just now without money."

"It is too common a case to excite surprise," I replied, and the thought of my own situation extorted a groan from me. The young man looked earnestly in my face, and was silent for some minutes. I saw that he did not like to ask me for assistance, and I felt that I could not offer him any. At length he resumed the subject.

"I am ashamed, sir, to throw myself upon your consideration, aware as I am that I cannot urge the most distant claim upon it, except the general one which distress has upon compassion, particularly upon the compassion of those whose office it is to console the unfortunate; but the fact is, that I am at this moment utterly penniless,—I have not even the means of paying my bill here; that, however, is a trifle; but without a few shillings I cannot proceed to Cambridge, and if I do not arrive there in time I shall forfeit my engagement with the manager at Barnwell, on which my very subsistence depends. Twenty shillings will be sufficient for my necessity, but less will not avail me anything, for I must present myself before the manager with some appearance of independence. Now, sir, if you will have the benevolence to lend me this sum I give you my word as a gentleman"—and here he drew himself up as if he had been performing *Cambyzes* or *Busiris*,—"I will repay you out of my benefit,

for I have made it a condition with the manager that I shall have one within the first month of my engagement."

I could not bear to tell the young man that I was afraid his prospect of repayment rested upon very visionary grounds ; and, in fact, if I had had the money to spare, he would not have had to dwell upon the destitution under which he laboured ; and he looked so earnestly in my face whilst he spoke, that I shrank from the idea of adding to his unhappiness ; but I was obliged to summon up my resolution and to tell him the truth—that my situation was as deplorable as his own ; that the sum he had asked of me was nearly one-fourth of all that I possessed, and that I had no certainty with respect to any further means of subsistence for some months to come when that should be gone.

His countenance betrayed both mortification and disappointment as I spoke. "I was to blame," said he after a moment's pause, "to trouble you, sir, with my exigencies ; of course I can expect nothing from a gentleman who replies to my statements of necessity by a still stronger representation of his own. Perhaps, however, your office may have brought you acquainted with some individual who may be sufficiently opulent to assist a person of some refinement under circumstances of unexpected distress."

I set myself immediately to calling over in my own mind all my richest parishioners ; but, strange to say, whether from the hurry of my thoughts or from not being yet sufficiently acquainted with their dispositions and habits—though I ought to be after nearly twenty years' residence amongst them,—I could not name one to whom I could, with any confidence, recommend this young man to ask for assistance. To have sent him to any house where he might have a chance of being refused—perhaps unfeelingly sent away,—would have been to expose him to a degradation for which I would not have forgiven myself ; yet, to say that I did not know a single person in Creykedale or the neighbourhood generous enough to lend a stranger twenty shillings on an emergency, was such a reflection upon human nature that, for the honour of my parish, I could not prevail upon myself to give such a reason for my declining to specify any one to whom he might venture to apply.

In this dilemma I resolved to consult my Margaret as to

what was to be done. She has so much judgment and so much feeling ; she always balances rightly, and if the scales are exactly even, then her compassion pops its little finger into that on the side of mercy, and the matter is settled. " Mr. Shirley," said I, " I am really grieved at your situation. I have told you how poor I am ; nevertheless, I will consult my eldest daughter, and if we can help you we will. I will go home directly, and you shall have my answer within an hour."

The poor young man's countenance was all in a glow in an instant, and he squeezed my hand, as if he felt assured of my befriending him. All the way I went home I could not help thinking how curious it was that a stranger—a strolling player, too, of all people—should single out me, the minister, to apply to for relief.

There must be some secret sympathy between the necessitous and myself ; every one that is in want of assistance comes to me, that have, alas ! so little to give. I am often obliged to turn away my head from beggars, lest they should read in my eyes the pity which I have no means of indulging. If a hungry dog comes into a room where I may happen to be taking anything, he is sure to select my knee to lay his damp cold nose upon, and to keep looking up in my face, in the full confidence that he will eventually get a scrap from me : I fancy this a sign that my lot is cast among the poor. Lord grant that it may also be among the poor in spirit, with the meek and lowly-minded.

My girls were waiting my return, full of wonder and anxiety respecting the stranger. Lucy was sure her dream was coming to pass, and I saw that Margaret hoped I had some good news to communicate. When I informed them of the result of my visit, their countenances expressed only compassion, nothing of disappointment. I told Margaret I had come back for her advice. She looked at me affectionately and said, " Father, I know your thoughts, and you do not need my advice."

" And what do I think then, my child ? " I asked.

" You think," said she, " I will do to this poor player as I should wish Doctor Pluffy to do to me."

I am not sure I had thought this, but, at any rate, whilst Margaret was speaking, I thought I had. I went to

my desk, therefore, and counted out the twenty shillings, and told Margaret she should take them herself to the stranger, for I did not wish to hear his thanks : gratitude affects me as much as ingratitude makes me angry.

Margaret put on her bonnet, and was out of the house in an instant ; Lucy ran to the window to watch for her return ; and I sat down to begin a sermon. On opening the Bible, my eye rested on the words, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." That passage has always been a favourite of mine, so I took it for the subject of my discourse—it is full of matter.

Margaret came back almost before we thought she had had time to get there ; but she had acquitted herself bravely of her commission, and the fresh air and quick walking had given her such a colour and so much animation, that it did my heart good to look at her.

Lucy was very desirous to know what the young man had said. "I scarcely stayed to hear," her sister replied ; "I gave him the money, and told him my father had sent it with his best wishes. He appeared so confused that I did not like to look at him."

She then untied her bonnet, and began to lay the cloth for dinner : it was not long in preparing, but just as we were sitting down to it, some one knocked at the door ; Lucy ran to open it, and in came Mr. Shirley. He now looked quite the gentleman, for he had got his boots cleaned, and taken off his great-coat—in place of which he exhibited a handsome suit of black. It immediately struck me that it was probably the dress in which he might play *Hamlet*, or *Jaffier*, or some other genteel character ; be that as it might, it became him vastly well.

He came up to me, and putting out his hand with a very engaging air of frankness, he told me he could not think of leaving Creykedale without coming to express his gratitude for the essential service I had rendered him, and which, he added, it would be the greatest happiness of his life to repay.

I told him I should rejoice in his being able to do so, and meanwhile I begged he would sit down to table with us, and make himself heartily welcome to the best that we could give him. "You see before you, sir," I said,

"A Roman meal—a radish and an egg,"

but you must take us as you find us ; and, in fact, I am not sure that we could have given you anything better, had we been apprized of your coming."

The young man smiled ; he did not require a second invitation. Fortunately the bread was fresh baked : he said he had never eaten any so good in his life, and indeed he did justice to it, more especially when Lucy told him Margaret had made it ; he instantly requested another slice—that might be by way of compliment. He acknowledged, however, that he had eaten nothing till then since the preceding evening, which in part accounted for his gallantry exhibiting itself in so substantial a form ; and now Margaret whispered a few words to Lucy, who went out, and presently returned with a jug of ale : this was quite a treat on the part of my dear prudent housekeeper, who always undertakes the administration of our funds, and altogether it gave quite an air of festivity to our little party.

The presence of a guest is a rare occurrence at our humble board. I felt my spirit gladdened by it, and my heart yearned towards the young man. His countenance had lost its expression of uneasiness, though now and then a shade of something like pensiveness passed over it. I grieved to think that his profession should be of so dangerous and uncertain a nature. I thought of exhorting him upon it, but as I had nothing better to suggest, I did not feel it right to disgust him with the path he had chosen.

We talked about the stage, and dramatic poetry, which, in my youth I loved. He said he had made his first appearance in "The Spoiled Child," and that the last performance in which he had taken an interest was "The Clandestine Marriage," a good old comedy,—but I should have thought him fitter for tragedy. He added that he was now studying "A Friend in Need," and "A Cure for the Heart-ache," to his performance in which he looked forward with such pleasure that his heart throbbed quicker whenever he thought of it. What a strange sort of existence is that of a player !

My little Lucy was greatly amused with everything he told us, but Margaret looked grave all the time he spoke of the stage, and I saw she was thinking, like myself, that it was a pity he had not been brought up to something more

useful. I fancied that at first he thought I had somewhat exaggerated the straitness of my circumstances to him ; for our room would not have suggested the idea of poverty, with its book-shelves and flower-stands, and nice worked hearth-rug : everything in it so beautifully bright, too, and clean ; and the whiteness of the table-cloth set off the humbleness of the repast. Poor people are seldom neat, yet they ought, of all others, to be so : it is the best economy ; I have always preached it up to my daughters. The smallest speck could not escape Margaret's eyes, and she has taught Lucy the same exactness ; hence, our house has always an air of comfort which, to a certain degree, tranquillizes the mind, even in the midst of trials : there is nothing so dispiriting as confusion and dirt.

It was evident, however, that the young man bore his debt to me in mind ; for he asked me very earnestly how long I could do without the money ; adding, that I might depend upon his sending it to me the very moment he should receive any of his salary. I sincerely trust it may be so, for I know not what I shall do should he disappoint me ; and players are generally thoughtless. I do not think this the case, however, with him ; his brow sometimes shows deep reflection ; he seems to me to have something on his mind ; I dare vouch for him it is not on his conscience.

My girls went with him after dinner, to show him the spreading cedar at the bottom of our garden, of which we are so proud, and which looks so graceful just now, as it lifts its arms against the snow, a cheering emblem of fortitude in adversity. They stayed away upwards of half an hour, for he was so pleased with it that he would make a kind of memorandum drawing of it in his pocket-book, notwithstanding the keenness of the air ; it was well, however, he did not hurry himself, for I had time to turn to my desk and write him a few words of affectionate counsel ; it was the only way in which I could manifest the interest I took in his welfare. May the Lord give his blessing to it ; a word in season has sometimes done much. I gave him the paper at the door, after he had taken leave of us. He pressed my hand and said, " It is impossible you can be unhappy ; your heaven is already begun, even in this world, and guardian angels attend your side." No doubt he alluded to my

daughters ; it was pretty in him to express his thanks in this manner. I told them of his parting words, and their eyes filled with tears. How sweet is the sensibility of youth !

"What a nice young man !" exclaimed Lucy ; "how I should like to see him act ?" "What a pity he is a player," said Margaret ; "how well he would look in the pulpit." Dear girls ! how exactly the remarks of each expressed her own character. They chatted merrily together over the event of the day, for a grand event it was in their history for us to have a visitor. Lucy said, perhaps it was the fulfilment of her dream. Soon after they went to bed, and I betook myself to my journal.

I trust what I have done may not be displeasing in the sight of the Lord, for I gave, not out of ostentation, nor even out of the weakness of being unable to refuse, but because my bowels yearned with compassion towards the young man.

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor ; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble."

CHAPTER VII.

WHO CAN HE BE ?

ALL the way from the parsonage Mr. Shirley might be seen "muttering his wayward fancies as he roved." Now, reader, gentle or otherwise, this is no figure of speech, for he actually did rove far out of the direct line to the "Roebuck," turning his head this way and that to catch another look at the little white gate and trellised windows, till his feet, going now to the right and now to the left, without his taking the trouble to guide them, soon brought him into lanes and alleys, not green, but muddy, which required him to recall his attention to his route, instead of repeating to himself sundry superlative epithets, apparently from Romeo, Orlando, Jaffier, and various other moonstruck and love-struck heroes, whose characters he was, by his own account, in the habit of performing to the life.

Arrived at length at the "Roebuck," he hastily demanded his bill and ordered his horse, evidently much to the chagrin

of the landlady, whose opinion of the importance and respectability of her guest seemed to have undergone a complete change very much in his favour, during the short period of his absence. She had got a fire in the *best* parlour, ready for him by the time he should return; two candles, round each of which Miss Nancy had put a fringe of scalloped paper, were placed upon the table, and a sort of silent, mysterious respect appeared to pervade the atmosphere of the bar as he approached.

"Are you going to set out so late, my lor—hem!—sir?" asked the landlady, in a tone of voice full of solicitude. "I'm afraid you'll find it getting dark."—"And the roads are none of the best," said Mr. Greensides, for a wonder, volunteering a remark.

"Oh, I shall gallop to Barnwell in an hour!" said Mr. Shirley; "I must get there before the curtain drops. Where is my great-coat?"

"Nancy, run; where is his lord—hem!—the gentleman's great-coat? Look in the next room, look up-stairs."

"I left it in the room I was first shown into," said Mr. Shirley; "I hung it up there myself when I went out."

"Deary me!" said Mrs. Greensides, as red as the turkey-cock, in an instant, "where can it be?"

"You had it in the bar just now, my dear," said Mr. Greensides quietly.

"Nay, if it had been brought in here by mistake," said Mrs. Greensides, yet redder at the suggestion, "it would be here still."

"Why, la! and so it is," said Miss Nancy; "only see, mother, why you are sitting upon it all this time!"

"Well, to be sure, and so I am! How very unaccountable!" said the good woman, getting up to drag it forth, but in so doing out fell the contents of the pockets, consisting of a gold snuff-box, a belcher handkerchief, a pair of green spectacles, and two letters directed to the Right Honourable Lord Orville, Trinity College, Cambridge.

Mrs. Greensides now turned of a duskier hue, and stammered out an apology: "Deary me! Oh, how the things have got turned inside out! I'm sure I beg your lordship's pardon."

"Meaning me?" asked Mr. Shirley, with an air of sur-

prise. "Oh, as to the things, there's no harm done ; but as to myself, you are quite mistaken if you fancy that I am a lord ; I'll play you one to the life ; Lord Ogleby, Lord Townley, Lord Dorriforth, Lord Sparkle, Lord Foppington, —I've done them all before now ; but as to being a lord myself anywhere else excepting on the boards, I can only say you might with as much truth take me for the Lord Chancellor."

He had by this time drawn on his shabby great-coat, replaced the articles in his pocket, and regained a considerable portion of the Thespian air which had characterized him at his entrance. He then proceeded to discharge his bill, dispensed his gratuities right and left to the chambermaid and ostler, glanced at his money to see if he had enough left for turnpikes, wished good-night to the "ladies" in the bar, mounted his horse, and clattered off.

"That 'ere gemman pays like a lord," said John the ostler, throwing up the shilling, which the moment before he had not, into the air, and catching it again with an air of triumph.

"Natural he should," said Miss Nancy, who could not find it in her heart to *unlord* the hero of her imagination merely upon the authority of his own word.

"Yes, yes, it's natural enough with some folks," said Mrs. Greensides, much disappointed at his departure. "Lightly come, lightly go ; however it's all the better for John. But, after all, if this young man was really a lord, wouldn't he have ordered something—a bottle of wine or so, just to take a glass or two, and leave the rest like a gentleman ? Instead of that he took neither bit nor sup. And then, to go and stay so long at Mr. Slender's ; what could he want there ?"

"No, to be sure," said Miss Nancy, "he might just as well have stayed here, for that matter, and chatted a bit with us in the bar."

"To be sure he might," said Mrs. Greensides ; "and if it comes to that, I could have helped him, I should think, to a benefit, better than Mr. Slender could ; but I cannot think what business he had with Lord Orville's letters, and such a handsome gold snuff-box, in his pocket ; if he had but stayed away a minute longer we might have had ——"

"A pinch of snuff," said Mr. Greensides.

"A peep into the letters," continued Mrs. Greensides, "and then we should have known how they came there."

Further animadversion was suspended by "a regular customer," who made the "Roebuck" his half-way house three times a week, in his journey for orders between Cambridge and Bury.

"Well, Mr. Buttercups," said Mrs. Greensides, "how are you? Deary me! you are late to-night; it's very uncommon to see you after your time."

"Or before it either," said Mr. Buttercups; "but I was fool enough as I came through Barnwell to step in and take a look at the player-folk; they said so much about one of 'em, Shirley, I think, is his name; and a clever fellow he is, too."

"But you didn't see him to-night?"

"But I did, though. Why should I not? He was plain enough to be seen. He was dressed for all the world like the Scotch gentleman bagpiper that goes about the country for a wager, and they called him Macbeth, which is a Scotch name, I reckon; at least, I know Macbean the drover's is: and he pretended to see a knife before him, and he caught at it in this fashion,"—and here Mr. Buttercups caught the vacant air with his brawny fist, as if he was intent upon entrapping a blood-thirsty gadfly. "Wonderful natural! you'd have sworn he'd grapped it; and when he found he hadn't got it after all, he looked so baulked and wild, you'd have thought he was going stark mad. People clapped him rarely."

"Well, this is strange," said Mr. Greensides. "Why, he's only just gone away from here, that very Shirley; at least, he said that was his name, and I should think it is, for he came here to inquire if he could have a benefit."

"He's got a topping one yonder," said the grazier; "house is cram full, from top to bottom; and here's his name in the playbill." And there, sure enough, it stood in capitals: "MACBETH, Mr. SHIRLEY."

"Well, it's very odd! That there young man, then, could not be Mr. Shirley, after all, though he said so positive he was," said Miss Nancy.

"And he could not be Lord Orville," said her mother, "for he said as positive he was not; so who can he be?"

"He rides a very good horse," said the landlord.

"I hope he has not stolen it!" said the landlady. "And now I think of it, he's not unlike one of your dashing good-for-noughts, that goes about the country changing names, and helping themselves to whatever they can clap their hands on."

"Nay, mother, I don't think that," said Miss Nancy. "He looks every bit as much of a gentleman as young Mr. Pluffy does."

"Well, and didn't Dick Scapegrace look like a gentleman too?" demanded her mother, impatient of dissent from her conjecture; "and, marry! not unlike young Mr. Pluffy neither; and didn't people say how genteel he looked in his new suit of black and his lemon-coloured gloves, just before he was turned off, poor young fellow! And pray, how could this here Shirley, as he calls himself, come honestly by another man's coat? I should know it again anywhere—that coat."

"Well," said Mr. Buttercups, throwing down his reckoning, and strapping his thick dark surtout across his ample chest as he got up, "I shall keep a sharp look-out on the road; he'll not get my money without a good tussel for it, I can tell him." So saying, he nodded a good-night to Mrs. Greensides; chucked Miss Nancy under the chin, telling her he supposed she would be married before he saw her again; and remounting his white-faced chestnut mare, set off at a brisk trot for his own home.

The quiet man then wound up the clock, and ten minutes after all was still at the "Roebuck," save the ticking of the said clock and the nasal accompaniment of Mr. and Mrs. Greensides.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

I AM much more cheerful and resigned since I have made up my mind to forgive Dr. Pluffy. I am now myself again. It is impossible to be inwardly happy whilst one harbours sentiments of anger. How clearly we may discern that out of moral evil comes moral good, if we be willing to extract it. If no one ever offended us—if nothing ever opposed our wishes, what would become of the courage and patience

which grow by exercise, and bring forth the most salutary fruits!—and what of that angel-like virtue, *consideration*, which teaches us to be charitable to others by bearing in mind what we ourselves endured? And, after all, Dr. Pluffy is really more excusable than at first my wounded self-love and my blameable anxieties would allow me to think him. It is scarcely possible that he, amidst his daily luxuries, should have any adequate idea of the privations of the poor, or, at least, of the class among them that shrink from making their sorrows and their sufferings known. Most likely he has his own vexations in some way or other. They say his son troubles him; I am sorry for it. Yes, I feel that I forgive him, and I am thankful to my Almighty Father that he gives me the grace to do so. How, indeed, if I did not, could I offer up to Him, this very day, in the face of my congregation, the blessed prayer He has himself taught us, “to forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive them that trespass against us.”

“Yea, I will wash mine hands in innocency; so shall I compass thine altar, O Lord.”

From a child those words have sounded sweetly in my ears. Ere yet I knew their import, they seemed to diffuse a secret peace over my bosom. And, oh! what a precious gift from the Lord is that of innocence! It is not a mere absence of the commission of actual evil; it is a positive good,—a happiness in itself, and a groundwork for the reception of every happiness of which the soul is capable. The most trifling act, even of mere amusement, if done in a spirit of innocency, is pleasing and acceptable in the sight of the Lord.

We have yet some pleasure in the midst of our anxieties. My dear Margaret has had a present made her of a silk dress, from Mrs. Tittup, Lady Flyaway's maid. Margaret had mended some lace for her, and this gown was meant, I suppose, as a genteel way of paying her; at any rate, it was offered so kindly that it would have been the height of pride to have refused it. Lucy is busy helping her sister to unpick it and make it up again. When it is turned they tell me it will look “as good as new,” as the people say; and, truly, I believe she will look as well in it as if it were just out of the

shop. It is a rich warm brown. I well remember her dear mother having one the same colour when we were married ; it was all the fashion then, and was called the Devonshire brown ; well did it become her, and it will become her daughter no less, for she has her mother's golden locks, and that same fair complexion, with a tinge of palest pink on her cheek like the innermost leaves of a white rose. What a quiet dignity, too, there is in the dear girl ! Verily, sometimes I could fancy her Queen Esther in the palace of Ahasuerus, instead of the portionless child of a poor peniless curate. But what a blessing a daughter is in a house ! How could I have borne the loss of the mother of nine, had she not left me this sweet image of herself, at once to recall her to my mind and to console me under it ? What a cheerful domesticity daughters spread over a dwelling ! What innocent gaiety !—and then what sweet attentions—what feminine graces ! Surely, it is a lovely and pleasant thing to live in such an atmosphere of holy breathings ! What a beautiful expression is that in Sacred Writ, that our daughters shall be as “corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.” My poor house would be unpolished enough without my daughters ; but, as it is, they fill it with beauty.

“Praised be the Lord for all his tender mercies. Praise him, O my soul ; forget not all his benefits.”

Westburn, the linen-draper, has shown himself a good-hearted man and a kind neighbour. I have just been to tell him that I could no longer afford to take part of the newspaper with him, as Dr. Plufty had reduced my salary. He held out his hand to me,—“Well,” said he, “that shall make no difference in the matter ; I shall take the newspaper all the same, and you shall read it by your own fire-side, as usual.”

How wrong I was to make a trouble of so small a thing ! We ought never to despair. There are more good people in the world than we give it credit for : the poor find them out oftener than the rich, and in that they possess an advantage over their wealthier brethren.

I shall now know how the Polish affairs go on. It is

pleasant, however, to see the list of ecclesiastical preferences from time to time. It quite cheered me, last week, to find the name of my old schoolfellow and college-chum, Harry Hawthorn, again among the promotions. He is in a fair way to get the mitre Lucy dreamt of. We have often clubbed for the kettle at Magdalen, and many a social cup of tea have we had together.

That baker is a bad man. I have paid him every farthing I owed him up to last week ; this morning my little Lucy went for some bread, and he gave her a loaf so hard and burnt, that the poor child objected to it, upon which he fell into such a passion, that the people who were going by stopped to hear what was the matter. Still he went on just the same, telling her he did not want such customers, and that unless she came with the money in her hand, she might go for her bread elsewhere ; and that if her father could afford to ask players to dine with him, he could afford ready money for bread.

Behold how slight a cause may give rise to calumny ! Truly does St. James say, " The tongue can no man tame ; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Poor Lucy came sobbing home, ashamed to look any one in the face. My heart bled for her, and both Margaret and I were too busy consoling her to think anything of her having come back without the loaf.

The baker would not have treated her thus had I not been poor. I have heard say that Doctor Pluffy never pays his bills but once a year, and not always very punctually then ; yet all the tradespeople are striving for his custom, and all hats are off to him every time he goes out. So true is what King Solomon says :

" The rich man's wealth is his strong city ; but the destruction of the poor is their poverty."

I had written thus far, when I thought I would lay down my pen and take up my book ; it is so hurtful to one's inward self to indulge angry thoughts. It was honest old Fuller I looked into ; and, strange enough, I opened it at the very page where he more especially commends those

"who," he says, "with diligence fight against poverty ; though neither conquer till Death make it a drawn battle."

I know I try to brace up my nerves and muscles for the contest ; and surely I ought to be equal to it, for it began with me in my very childhood, and it bids fair to last me out to the end of my days. But, alas ! I feel sometimes as though I should be glad if the great umpire would step in and decide the contest : and this murmuring spirit grieves me more sorely, when I come to reflect upon it, than all the petty cares and temporary privations that call it forth.

Sometimes I persuade myself that I could bear my trials more manfully if they were of a loftier nature ; but it is the natural pride of the human heart that suggests this thought. We feel indignant at being told to "wash in the river Jordan, and we shall be clean." We want mighty floods to be prescribed to us—lofty things to contend with ; that we may have the glory of conquest rather than the grace of submission. Yet if it please my Almighty Father to make my state of spiritual trial to consist in daily small crosses, shall I not daily take them up in the same spirit of obedience as if they were invested with the dignity of martyrdom ? Is there any one of them so small, so contemptible, so humiliating but that my blessed Lord has taken it up before me ? Did he not endure hunger and thirst, and see himself without a place wherein to lay his head ? Was he not "despised and rejected of men," forsaken even by his own chosen disciples ? And I, for whom He endured all this ! I dare to murmur and complain !

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

"O give me the comfort of thine help again ; according to the multitude of thy mercies, do away mine offences."

CHAPTER IX.

MORE GOSSIP.

"*La, Miss !*" said Simpson, as she was braiding Miss Pluffy's hair, in her mamma's dressing-room, "there's such a queer story got up at Creykedale, about Miss Slender."

"About Miss Slender!" exclaimed Miss Pluffy, scornfully. "Pray don't twitch me so!" and she made a grimace; for, somehow or other, the thoughts of Clement Courtney and the Misses Slender were associated together in her mind at that moment.

"La, Miss! I beg your pardon; I didn't mean to hurt you: but they say that young Lord Orville went to Creykedale, one day last week, disguised like a player, and that he fell quite desperate in love with Miss Margaret, and that he sent for the old gentleman to come to him at the 'Roebuck,' and promised to make him a bishop if he would send Miss Margaret to speak to him; and that then Miss Margaret came, and talked with him for an hour or two, by their two selves; and then she went away; and then he dressed himself like a king, and went after her, and he dined with them—and they had such fine doings; and then he came back for his horse, and galloped away to Barnwell, because he said he must be in time for the play;—and it's all settled."

"That will do," said Miss Pluffy, looking at herself in the glass. "What a ridiculous story!" she said, so very calmly, because she felt quite satisfied on finding the name of Clement Courtney was no way implicated in it.

"A ridiculous story, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Pluffy; "I think it a shameful story, to compromise the name of a nobleman like Lord Orville with that of a strolling player and a poor curate's daughter. And the idea of poor Mr. Slender's being made a bishop!—that's the most ridiculous part of the whole matter to me: it would be a joke, indeed, to see him in lawn-sleeves, and Doctor Pluffy the simple rector of Gormanton."

Here the second dinner-bell rang; the last pin was hastily put in Miss Pluffy's Grecian tress, and the party descended in double-quick time, as it was one of Doctor Pluffy's rules of good breeding, sense, and good taste, never to permit himself or any of his family to keep dinner waiting one instant. No sooner was the cloth withdrawn than the communications of the dressing-room were again brought upon the carpet, and again Mrs. Pluffy expressed her indignation at the thought that by any possible combination of human events it could be brought about that a curate should be mitred, whilst his rector remained unmitred.

"My dear," said Doctor Pluffy, leaning back in his arm-chair, and tapping his stomach, as he was wont to do when all went well within, "if your head never aches till you see a mitre on Mr. Slender's, you will have very little to complain of; for he may say, poor man, with Sterne's *Yorick*, that 'if heaven were to rain mitres as thick as hail, there would not be one that would fit him.' Ha, ha, ha!"

"O yes, I remember," said Miss Emily Eleonora, "that's in 'Romeo and Juliet,' where he jumps into the grave, and talks about Ophelia. It's very affecting where he tells her to go to a nunnery."

"Wouldn't suit you, though, a bit, would it Emmy?" said Mr. Augustus Middleton Plumtree Pluffy, who had favoured his parents with his company that day: "no poetizing, no love-making in your nunneries; humdrum work there, I take it; worse than a freshman at Catharine's;—but, however, as to Mr. Slender's not finding a mitre to fit him, I wouldn't have any of you bet upon that: Lord Orville is a devilish queer fellow, and if he should take it into his head to make Margaret Slender a lady, and her father a bishop, he wouldn't leave a stone in his way unturned, I can tell you; and he has capital interest, if he will but condescend to make use of it."

Here the young Cantab had opened, unawares, a battery upon himself. "You ought to cultivate the friendship of such a man—for my sake if not for your own;" said the Doctor, pushing the decanter, with an offended air, towards the delinquent, after having filled his own glass.

"You ought to have brought him here long since," said Mrs. Pluffy; "I should have felt a mother's interest in keeping him out of such inferior society as the Slenders."

"Yes, brother, if you had introduced him, we could have sent him an invitation for our ball," said Miss Pluffy;—"and a title always sounds so well."

"And he would have been a most interesting addition, too, if he be so intellectual and handsome, and so singular as Mr. Courtney describes him," said Miss Emily Eleonora, with a suppressed sigh.

"I should have been very happy to have obliged each and everybody, jointly and separately, as the lawyers say," responded the incorrigible Trinitarian; "but I must remind

you of the old proverb, 'Any fool may lead a horse to water, but twenty cannot make him drink.' I have invited Lord Orville to Gormanton a dozen times already, but as to getting him to accept the invitation, *c'est autre affaire*; indeed, I verily believe he has got other fish to fry—begging the cook's pardon for descending into her province. I suppose the soles reminded me of it; but there is some mystification about him, and about Courtney too, for that matter; I cannot fathom it. There's a pretty little creature, always muffled up in a cap and shawl, at a house just out of Barnwell. Some people say she is Shirley's wife, but whatever she may be she never stirs out. Lord Orville is always there; and the night before last she fainted, or went into hysterics, or some bobbery or other, and Doctor Touchem was sent for; and I know Orville went to see her that very night, for I happened to be walking that way myself, and I saw him go in just about the time these wiseacres pretend he was at Creykedale."

"My son," said Doctor Pluffy;—but what he would have said posterity will never know, for at that moment a loud knock at the door announced a visitor. Up jumped the ladies, and ran into the drawing-room.

The visitor was no other than Clement Courtney, and right glad the ladies were to see him.

"We thought you were in London by this time," said Mrs. Pluffy.

"Yes," said the young ladies, both at once, "we thought you were in London;" though all three knew very well that he was not.

"I meant to have been there the day after I last had the pleasure of seeing you," said Courtney, "but a very unexpected occurrence detained me, and I shall not leave Cambridge at all during the vacation."

He looked so grave, and so unlike his usual self, as he spoke, that it was not very difficult to make out that the cause of his detention, whatever it might be, was not of an agreeable nature. There was an awkward silence for a minute or two, and Augustus entered, very apropos, just when nobody seemed to know exactly what to say.

"Ah! Courtney; how are you? I thought you were dining with Orville to-day."

"No, I dined by myself; I was not fit for any other company."

"Why, what's the matter? It is not often that you have the blue-devils."

"No, but when I have, they are blue nine times dipped," said Courtney, trying to smile; "the fact is, that I have been annoyed, and am annoyed, and shall be still more so, I am afraid."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Pluffy, her round face, in an instant, assuming the length characteristic of condolence, "I am very sorry to hear you say so; and so we all are, I'm sure. If there is anything Doctor Pluffy or my son could do ——"

"Command me, my dear fellow," said Augustus, "I'm your man, your second, if you will, your bottle-holder, your bridegroom's man, or whatever you like;—fighting, bruising, marrying,—any desperate thing you may want a friend to back you in."

"Don't talk nonsense, Augustus," said Mrs. Pluffy.

"Why not, mother? We have been talking nothing else for the last half hour."

"Oh, Augustus, how can you say so?" exclaimed both the young ladies at once, shocked at being thought capable of talking nonsense.

"Why, what was all that about Lord Orville and a certain young lady?"

"What young lady? What do you mean?" exclaimed Courtney, rousing himself in an instant from his abstraction. The ladies looked at him; he was pale, and his lips quivered, "Has any one dared to say anything?"

"Oh, dear me, no!" interrupted Mrs. Pluffy, "my dear Mr. Courtney; dear me! it was nothing but nonsense. Augustus was right enough there; it was some foolish story my maid told the girls about one of poor Mr. Slender's daughters."

"Indeed!" said Courtney, a smile returning to his countenance, which was in an instant suffused with a deep red, something like the hue of shame, at having betrayed such impatience; "and pray, what was the story?"

"Oh, too ridiculous to talk about!" said Mrs. Pluffy; "the people at Creykedale have got it up that somebody went there in disguise to see Miss Margaret Slender; and

then they took it into their heads that it was Lord Somebody, and after all, I believe, it turned out to be a strolling player—one of the people at Barnwell."

"I heard something about it," said Courtney; "I believe he called himself Shirley."

"Oh, then there was something in it after all!" said Miss Pluffy.

"At any rate it was not Lord Orville," said Miss Emily Eleonora.

"Why, who, with a single grain of sense in their heads, could ever think it was," said her brother; "besides," turning to Courtney, "I rather fancy his lordship's travels in search of the beautiful are in a direction exactly opposite to Creykedale—what think you?"

"I don't think about the matter," said Courtney sharply. "If Orville had consulted me he would not have done many things he has done."

"He's somewhat odd this term," said Augustus,—"*I've remarked it myself.*" But Courtney made no reply, and seemed very much inclined to depart. Mrs. Pluffy, seeing him look towards the door, hastened to turn the conversation.

"Well, to be sure, it is wonderful how people will talk and meddle with what can be no business of theirs! But as for Mr. Slender, poor man, I must say, it is very imprudent in him to ask strangers to his house; and if he knew that it was a player he invited, why it was worse still. Such acquaintance are not likely to do his daughters any good, poor girls!" Courtney half smiled at her solicitude.

"What kind of a looking person is Mr. Shirley?" said Miss Pluffy, by way of saying something.

"What kind of a looking person is Lord Orville?" said Miss Emily Eleonora at the same instant.

"He is tall and fair-complexioned;—I beg your pardon, I mean, he is rather short, and somewhat dark," replied Courtney, answering both inquiries at once, in a way that threw no light upon either.

"Cross questions," said Augustus, laughing.

"I acknowledge I am very bad company," said Courtney: "the fact is, I ought not to have come out at all to-night; I shall go and shut myself up for a week, till I am in better

humour." So saying, he rose and took his leave, in spite of Mrs. Pluffy's entreaties that he would stay and have a little music, or a rubber, and make himself comfortable.

"How very strange Mr. Courtney is, to go away in such a hurry!" said Miss Pluffy, in a tone of disappointment; "he always used to stay the evening when he called after dinner, and now he has not been five minutes."

"Well, my dear," said her mamma, "he will stay longer the next time he comes; but you may see he has had something to worry him, and very sorry I am for it; he is a delightful young man."

"But what can he have to worry him?" said Miss Pluffy.

"Seeing that he has the sense to keep himself single," interrupted her brother.

"He is rich, and his own master," she continued, "and he is liked wherever he goes; he has got nothing to do but to make himself happy."

"Why, one would think so," said her mamma; "but as to that, my dear, everybody has their troubles, if the truth was known, and we know he has had his: both his parents dying within such a little time of each other was a very great grief to him—such excellent people, too; and then he is often troubled and anxious about his sister—she is so uncomfortable, I understand, with her uncle and aunt. Crosby House is such a dull place, they say, on the Yorkshire Wolds. She might as well be out of the world altogether, poor child; yet as her uncle is her guardian till she is of age, her brother cannot remove her before; though, as he does not hit it somehow with the Crosbys, I believe, any more than she does, and as she is his only sister, why, it is very natural he should be very fond of her, and vexed when she complains to him; and, perhaps she has been a little spoilt when her parents were alive, for I understand she is quite a beauty."

"The fact is," said Augustus, "old Crosby wants her to marry his son, to keep her ten thousand pounds in the family; and she hates him, and won't have anything to say to him; and so that keeps them all in hot water. I know I wish I could get introduced to her myself. I should like Courtney for a brother-in-law. What say you, girls; should you like him?"

"Like him!" The question was rather embarrassing, both to the elder and younger Miss Pluffy; but their mamma spared them a reply by cutting the matter short. "Don't jest about Miss Courtney, pray, Augustus," said she, "it is very unfeeling towards her brother. I know it would offend him very much if he could hear you talking so foolishly about her. I am sure he has his troubles, poor young man, some way or other, and I am very sorry for him, that I am; that's all I have to say."

Mrs. Pluffy was a good sort of woman in her way; that is to say, she always had a large stock of sympathy in hand for the sorrows or vexations of the rich; because, as she sagaciously observed, it seemed *so very hard* that they should have anything to prevent them from enjoying themselves: as to the poor, it was natural they should have to put up with things; it was what they must expect; and besides, they got used to it. She was, moreover, very hospitable, as well from natural sociability of disposition as from a prudent calculation of the advantages of keeping open house until her daughters should be provided for: and Clement Courtney had found in the friendly welcome of her fireside a sort of renewal of his domestic feelings, so sadly broken up by the death of his parents, which, in some measure, shut his eyes to the very little real congeniality of sentiment that existed betwixt himself and the family with whom he had thus gradually entered into habits of intimacy. To them, however, this intimacy was a much more important affair than the mere amusement of the passing hour. It gave birth to hopes and fears, schemes and plans innumerable. From the first moment of his introduction to them he was looked upon by each of the young ladies as a lawful prize; and it was only the perfect impartiality with which he divided his attentions between them, or rather returned in great part those which they lavished upon him, that kept them in good humour with each other on the subject; as the most critical observer could not have discovered any cause for jealousy between them.

Miss Pluffy had, however, a strong idea within herself, that, as the eldest, it was only right and proper that she should be the first to enter upon the dignity of the married state; she was, therefore, resolved to secure, by the steady-

ness of her siege, the heart which, it was evident, was not likely to be taken by surprise. Miss Emily Eleonora, on the contrary, was all for sudden impulses and vivid emotions. She had been exceedingly in love with "the interesting orphan," as she called him, after the death of his parents ; but when she found month after month pass without his seeming to understand her delicate sympathies, their warmth became somewhat chilled, and she would very willingly have made over her chance of a final conquest of him to her sister if she could, in return, have been indemnified for her disinterestedness by the acquaintance of Lord Orville, whom she had figured to herself as handsome and headstrong, variable as the winds, "untameable as flies,"—in short, of the Byronian class, which, to her imagination, comprised everything that was interesting.

No wonder, then, that the discussion respecting Courtney's gravity and Lord Orville's eccentricities, which was so full of separate interest to each, should be renewed by both the young ladies as soon as they were left to themselves, eliciting, in the course of it, many observations, more carping than kind, respecting Mr. Slender and his daughters, who seemed, all on a sudden, to have become objects of curiosity, where they had never before excited any feeling beyond that sort of pity which is too truly said to be very closely allied to contempt.

CHAPTER X.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

It is astonishing how soon a thing is known in a little place like this—one would verily think the birds of the air told it. Already the people have got it up that Dr. Pluffy has another curate in view. A blow like that would inevitably be my death-stroke. The butcher has certainly heard something of it, for he sent his wife to us this afternoon to tell us that the times were so hard he found it quite impossible to serve us any longer, except for ready money. She is really a well-behaved woman : she repeated, half a dozen times at least, how much she respected us all, and ended her apologies by advising us to go for the

future to her opposite neighbour Weighclose, as he was a rich man, and could afford to wait for his money. This was generous in her, as I always understood there was a great rivalry between them. I did not like to tell her that he served us two years ago ; but we found he made us pay a penny a pound more than he charged his ready-money customers, and that when we taxed him with it, he at first denied the fact, but seeing that useless, he avowed it, and told us that if he had to wait a year for his money, it was only fair that it should bear interest. Perhaps he was not wrong in that ; but I always pay as soon as I have anything to pay with.

All my worldly wealth is now reduced to five pounds two shillings and sixpence. What is to be done ? Nobody will give me credit ; perhaps I ought not to ask it ; yet how is it possible to pay for everything as I want it for the next six months. And then, if Doctor Pluffy should really choose another curate I should be literally turned into the streets with my poor girls !

I awoke myself this morning with a deep sigh, long before daylight. How dismal is the sad anticipation of evil—to be indistinctly conscious, before our faculties are thoroughly aroused, that there is something to make us unhappy as soon as we can collect our thoughts sufficiently to recall it. I lay some time calculating the resources to which I could apply in my miserable situation. I thought of my cousin, the attorney, at Cambridge ; but attorneys are so used to tales of distress, it seems to them quite natural that one-half of the world should be poor and the other half rogues. Moreover, he is but my second-cousin, and such affinities are acknowledged as relationship only among the rich. If the bishop's mitre that Lucy dreamt of should drop from the skies upon my head on New-year's Day, I should have half the country claiming kindred with me before Twelfth-night.

"The poor man is hated even of his neighbours, but the rich have many friends." So said the wisest of men three thousand years ago ; and the experience of succeeding ages has not been able to add or take away one iota from his knowledge of the heart of man.

I got up as soon as it was light, and resolved to write to Doctor Pluffy at once. May He in whose hands are the hearts of men incline him to read my letter with compassion! I here copy it:—

“REVEREND AND RESPECTED SIR,—It is with an agonized heart that I take up my pen to address you, for every one here is talking of your sending another curate to take my place. Whether this be really your intention, or whether the report has only arisen from a short conversation I held with one of my neighbours respecting the last interview I had with your reverence, it is impossible for me to know; but the uncertainty is very painful.

“I have endeavoured faithfully to fulfil the duties of the situation you have entrusted me with. I have expounded the word of God to the best of my ability, with simplicity and truth. I am not aware that I have ever drawn down censure upon myself in my ministerial character; and my conscience, in all that concerns my office and my flock, is void of offence. I acknowledge, and at this moment not without bitter self-reproach, that I humbly asked you for some small addition to my salary: perhaps I was wrong in so doing—I ought to have been contented with my lot, such as it was appointed to me. But you, reverend sir, mentioned to me, at that time, a deduction from the sum which already I find barely sufficient to procure me and my family, few as we are in number, the necessaries of life. May your benevolence think better on this head, and suffer matters to remain as they did between us before I had the imprudence and temerity to open my mouth on the subject. I have served the cure, under your most respectable predecessor and your reverence, nearly twenty years. I am now approaching my sixtieth year, and my gray hairs sufficiently proclaim my age. If, as your reverence says—and as I can too easily believe,—there are everywhere to be found young men who would gladly take the duty upon themselves for forty pounds a year, and some even for nothing, how can I, without influence, without friends, hope, at my time of life, to find another curacy against such a host of youthful competitors? And how can I obtain bread in any other calling, seeing that from my youth upwards I have been solely dedicated to the altar of the Lord? No, reverend sir; my bread, and that of my children, depends solely on your will and pleasure; if you cast us out, there remains for us nothing but what the hand of charity may hold out to us in casual relief. My daughters are now almost women; and though they have not a single article of superfluity in their possession, they yet cannot be clothed without some little expense. At leisure hours I cultivate our garden, from which we draw a considerable part of our subsistence, for, fortunately, the plot of ground is productive, and bears testimony in favour of its management. If we require a little job of carpentry, lock-mending, or whitewashing, I employ for it no hands but my own. My daughters, likewise, take in needlework when they can procure it; but, in a village so poor as this, much cannot be expected—no one is rich enough to employ another. Still, the blessing of God has, thus far, been on me and mine. We have never been ill, happily for us—for how could we have paid for

medical attendance? We have, certainly, had many privations on an income of fifty pounds a year; on forty we must necessarily have others far more severe, for they must trench upon essentials. Nevertheless, if such should be your reverence's pleasure, I submit; but I confide in your compassion, and in the mercy of the Lord, not to deprive me at once of the means of subsistence, and the blessing of serving in His temple. Entreating your reverence to relieve me, as soon as you can find leisure so to do, from my cruel suspense,—I remain, Reverend Sir, your dutiful and humble servant,

“THOMAS SLENDER.”

I have just sent the letter to the post by Lucy. I felt strangely fluttered when I heard the door shut after her—my heart seemed to faint within me;—ah! if it was “fixed, trusting in the Lord,” I should “not be afraid of evil tidings;” but, alas! upon the reception of this poor scrawl depend my subsistence, my office, my respectability, and my standing in society.

When I came into the parlour, I found Margaret sitting at work in the window. She was turning my best waistcoat—for so it has been called these ten years, which, she said would make it as good as ever: a truly skilful operation, considering its preceding services. She looked as innocent and happy as an angel: her mild eyes beamed with affection; the sun, too, shone brilliantly in at the window, and touched her golden tresses with a radiant glow—it made the room look marvellously pleasant; I could have fancied it full of celestial light. I felt my heart fill with thankfulness and joy.

I have my sermon to write, and I am determined to begin one this very morning on a subject I have often meditated: “The Consolations of the Poor;” I have fixed, too, upon my text—“Lo! the poor crieth, and the Lord heareth him; yea, and saveth him out of all his troubles.”

I have really made a glorious discourse—if Lucy's mitre-cap had been upon my head I could not have done better. My heart glowed within me as I wrote, and I felt imbued with something of that noble spirit, in which St. Paul says,—“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For which cause we faint not—but though

our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

I have always found my discourses, with the blessing of God upon them, effective; and that, I think, is because in them I have always addressed the conscience, and analyzed the heart of the only sinner whom I can know thoroughly, and that is myself.

Yes, assuredly, when I turn my eyes inwards, I can never want themes of instruction. Under the general aspect of human nature I describe my individual infirmities, and besetting sins. In them my poor people recognize their own, and whilst my heart inwardly weeps repentant, they also melt into tears of contrition; I paint my hopes, my consolations—they glow with the same. Ah! how sweet a bond of humanity and mutual assistance ought the knowledge to be among Christians, that "as we have all been wrecked by the same storm, so we all look to be saved by the same Redeemer." For myself, I know I always feel more in charity with all mankind after I have been expounding the doctrines of infinite mercy and love, in the humble hope that my deductions may be as satisfactory to others as to myself. It is with a pastor as with a physician: he knows the power of his remedies, though he cannot know precisely the effect they may have on different constitutions; but the first thing is to prescribe them honestly and fearlessly.

We have had a visit this evening from Mr. Shirley; he brought us a brace of pheasants, which he begged my acceptance of. It was grateful in the young man. I could not help asking him to come to-morrow to partake of them, despite of the baker's ill-natured remark; but I cannot bear anything like inhospitality. He coloured up to the eyes at my invitation, and looking towards my girls, he said he should be very happy if it would not be an intrusion. He is marvellously modest, for a player—but so much the better: if he were not so, certainly I should not for one single hour make him the companion of my daughters. He did not stay long; indeed, it was so late when he came, that we were preparing to go to bed. He seemed in excellent

spirits, and was well dressed—he is really a fine young man. He asked what time we dined—he smiled, I thought, when we said one o'clock ; “but we could make it later,” said Margaret. “So far from that,” he replied, “I wish it were earlier still.” This was very gallant, for he could not really mean that he should be glad of his dinner sooner. When he had taken his leave, a grand consultation took place between my young housekeepers how best to do the honours of the table. Poor things! it is such an event for them to have *company*, as they term this single guest. They were very merry upon it, however, till they went to bed, and, I doubt not, they are talking over the same subject still, for I hear their sweet voices in high glee over my head. May the Lord keep them in innocence and peace. Amen.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WORLDLY AND THE ROMANTIC.

THE Misses Pluffy were very different characters in the main, though, to a casual observer, they might appear cast in the selfsame mould. Miss Pluffy, under an appearance of great sensibility and warm feelings, was, in reality, completely worldly-minded, and entirely occupied with the thought of fixing herself well in life—that is to say, so as to better her condition, and increase her enjoyments ; and, what was still more important in her eyes, to fix them upon a basis that could not be moved. Doctor Pluffy, under an idea founded on a thorough knowledge of the world, of gaining preferment sooner by not appearing in want of it, had lived for some years much beyond his income ; and now that his family were grown up, he found it difficult to continue, on a necessarily increasing scale, the expenses in which he had so long indulged. Mrs. Pluffy had no fortune, beyond a sort of claim upon the recollection of a learned prelate with whose lady she had lived as companion, or, as some said, in a humbler capacity ; however that might be, the lady was fond of her ; the prelate was related to the—at that time—prime minister, and Mr. Pluffy, then himself

a curate, married her upon the speculation of being pushed on in the Church through her interest. In this he succeeded so far as to be presented, in the course of a few years, to the rectory of Gormanton-cum-Creykedale, a clear income of eleven hundred a year—but when was ambition ever satisfied! He panted for lawn sleeves, and thought himself very unfortunate in losing the minister by a change in the cabinet, and the prelate by a fit of apoplexy, at the precise moment when he had flattered himself their united goodwill might have procured him the bishopric of E—, just then vacant. He had, however, by that time, so completely reasoned himself into a belief of his entire fitness for the station to which he aspired, that it seemed to him impossible but that he should finally attain it. He went on, therefore, from year to year, in habits of living as expensive as if he had already done so; dreading any retrenchment, not only from his natural love of luxury and show, but also on account of the suspicion it might awaken of his prospects being less brilliant than heretofore.

The patience of the shopkeepers in Cambridge certainly is truly edifying, as long as they feel assured that they shall finally lose nothing by it; and as the prices they have the modesty to charge are generally on the calculation of seven years' usurious interest, they have just conscience enough not to manifest any very great anxiety on the matter, till one half of that time be expired; but some of the doctor's bills were exceeding the usual term of grace, and the discrepancy between his outward mode of living, and actual capabilities of paying for it, gave rise, whenever he was troubled with bile or indigestion, to many uneasy anticipations and gloomy hints on his part, which increased Miss Pluffy's prudential desire of finding a home for herself; and with this object continually before her, she could assume any character that she deemed most likely to gain the point, which was, indeed, her "being's end and aim."

Miss Emily Eleonora, on the contrary, was really and truly what she seemed—a romantic, sickly, good-natured girl, lounging on the sofa half the day, with the "Corsair," or "Lalla Rookh," or some other effusion equally well adapted to form the female character; and wandering about the fields the other half, in the hope of meeting some living

personification of the poetical cut-throats that so captivated her imagination.

As, however, these rural excursions required some shadow of excuse, she generally sallied forth ostensibly on a visit to some poor family or other, among whom she imparted willingly enough at divers times, a considerable portion of her pocket money, without clogging it with any of the advice that certain good people seem to think a necessary damper to prevent their gifts from conveying the unmixed pleasure they might otherwise afford. The objects of her bounty were therefore quite satisfied with her fits and starts of good feeling towards them, and said "she was a very nice, fine, young lady, only it was a pity she had not a little more colour in her cheeks ; but then, to be sure, her sister, Miss Pluffy, had a face like a cabbage rose, and a heart as hard as a stone—for she never gave away a halfpenny, nor a sixpence, nor spoke a word to a poor body, except she was with some young gentleman or other, and then she would do it just to set herself off."

One of Miss Emily Eleonora's favourite walks was to a cottage at the bottom of a woody lane, frequently traversed by the young men from Cambridge with their dogs. The poor woman who lived there was a cleanly, hard-working body, with half a dozen children ; she had married the blacksmith of the village, a sort of oddity in his way, who piqued himself on never laying his hands upon his wife, except in the way of kindness, "unless he was disguised in liquor," as he expressed it ; but unfortunately he assumed this disguise so often that at last it became his every-day garb ; and poor Betty Blacksmith, as she was generally called, had continually to come to the rectory, with her eyes either swelled out of her head with crying, or black with bruises, to complain of her help-mate. Still, she would always have it he was a very good husband when he was sober ; and the fellow had, in fact, a sort of droll repentance about him, which, added to a curious originality of character, made him a favourite in the village, notwithstanding his frequent delinquencies.

One morning when Miss Emily Eleonora had walked straight into the cottage, with her usual question—"Well, Betty, how is your husband to-day ?" she beheld a sort of German student-looking young man sitting by the fire, with

a book in his hand ; she started back, according to established rule in such cases ; and he hastily rose, in compliance with the same.

"I believe, madam," said he, with a sort of flourishing bow not devoid of grace, "the good woman will be here in a minute or two—your mammy is gone to the well, is she not, my little man?"

"Yees," said a curly-headed young blacksmith, who was preparing himself for his future path in life by making a skewer red-hot, and then boring it into the back of a chair, "she's gone for water, and then she's a going to git us our dinners,—there's dumpling and bacon a boiling in that 'ere pot."

"Well, Jemmy," said Miss Eleonora, "I will wait till she comes back, for I have brought her something. I beg I may not interrupt you, sir."

"O madam, my studies are of a very light kind—indeed I study men, and not books ; I am here, now and then, to 'catch the manners living as they rise.' The blacksmith is quite a study in himself."

Surely, thought Miss Eleonora, this must be Mr. Shirley, —and her heart fluttered, she did not know why ; she felt her cheeks, too, all in a glow—there was something so odd, in being under the same roof, however humble, with a player : perhaps she ought not to stay.

"I will go and look for your mother, Jemmy," said she, turning towards the door, but behold, it rained ! the shower, though it had come on so suddenly, had all the appearance of being likely to continue. She hesitated. The stranger likewise stepped to the door.

"I do not think it will last long," said he.

"I am afraid it will," replied Miss Emily Eleonora, in a plaintive tone, "it is so dark"

"Ah ! but the sun, the glorious orb, will break out again. I know it of old ; I am used to seeking for bright gleams through dark clouds," said he, gazing upwards with a sort of tragedy air, and his arms folded in a Byronic way, which Miss Emily Eleonora thought very striking.

"I am afraid I must wait a little while," said she, with a becoming air of embarrassment.

"Blow winds, and crack your cheeks !" exclaimed the young

man. "Pardon me," he added, as if suddenly recollecting himself; "but I delight in anything like a storm—I believe I have a dash of *Zanga* in my composition,—

" 'I like this warring of the elements,
It suits the gloomy temper of my soul.' "

"I should not imagine you to be of a gloomy temperament," said Miss Emily Eleonora, delighted with his rhapsodical manner.

"No more I am," said he, "for more than ten minutes at a time. Sometimes I am in the clouds with ecstasy; the fact is, I am

" 'Everything by turns, and nothing long.' "

But the rain beats in upon you,—I would not that 'the winds of heaven should visit that face too roughly.' Let me entreat of you to take this chair," placing one by the fireside for her. "Hollo, you young Caliban, run for some wood; do you not see the young lady is pale with cold?"

"She may come here then, and warm herself," said the little fellow, giving up his place, and pushing his skewer-bored chair to her.

"Well, Jemmy, you grow quite polite," said Miss Emily.

"No wonder," said the stranger, "if you condescend to come here to teach him."

"I come sometimes—indeed, I make it a point to visit all the poor in papa's parish."

"Oh, oh!" thought the stranger, "one of the rector of Gormanton's daughters." "I have heard," said he, with a deferential air, "of the amiableness of the Misses Pluffy; may I be permitted to hope that I have the honour of addressing one of them?"

"Papa is Doctor Pluffy," said Miss Emily, with a blush, and looking down,—for matters began to wear an interesting aspect.

"I am very fortunate," said the young man; "I shall always cherish the remembrance of this cottage."

"A cottage may be the scene of much happiness," said Miss Emily in a sentimental tone.

Just then in came Betty, with her pail of water on her head, and a child hanging on each side of her apron. "Dear me, Miss Emily! I'm so sorry you've been caught in the

rain! Stand out of the way, childer, don't you see Miss Emily?"

"Stay, my good woman, I will help you," said the young man, jumping up, with the kindest air imaginable, to put her pail on the floor; he then threw some brushwood on the fire, and sat down again with a look of gaiety and contentment that had really something very pleasing about it, —his presence did not seem to embarrass the good woman at all—she was evidently accustomed to it.

"Do you think, Betty, it will clear up?" asked Miss Emily.

"Why, miss, I'm sure I hardly know—I can't say,—about this time of day it often sets in, and then it blows off, and then it comes on again, fresh, like. Shall our little Jem run for an umbrella for you?"

"I have been very remiss, not to have offered to have gone myself," said the young man; "to say the truth, I thought of it, but I had not the resolution to propose it."

"What delicacy! what a delightful young man!" thought Miss Emily; "what elegant manners!" "Oh, sir," replied she, "I could not possibly have allowed you to take that trouble—a gentleman that I do not know even by name." Her concluding words were conveyed in a tone very like a sigh, which was answered by the young man with an animated apostrophe.

"A name! what's in a name? besides there is nothing so awkward, as Sterne justly says, as a man having to tell his own name. I never can announce myself, it always reminds me of 'My name is Norval; on the Grampian Hills my father feeds his flock.'"

"What! your father's a grazier, then, is he, Mr. Norval?" said Betty; "well, it's a very good business, they reckon, but it's bad enough when rot gets among 'em."

Mr. Norval, as she called him, laughed immoderately at this remark. Miss Emily thought to make one more profound.

"The Grampian Hills are in Scotland, are they not?" she asked in her softest voice.

"They were when I last had the pleasure of seeing them," replied the young man.

"Then, of course you know Walter Scott?" a deduction that would have posed a senior wrangler.

"I had not that honour."

"But you have been at Melrose?"

"O, yes!—

"'If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,
Go visit it by the pale moonlight.'"

"I love moonlight," said Miss Emily; "it seems somehow to lift one from earth—it is like——"

"Your pattens, if you please, miss," said a liveried youth, at that moment popping in his head, "and *umberel*; and master bid me tell you that there's a stuffed heart for dinner, and that it gets cold in a minute."

What a bathos!—pattens, umbrella, and a stuffed heart! getting cold, too, in a minute! However, the respect with which "the interesting stranger," as Miss Emily Eleonora mentally designated her new acquaintance, eyed the showy badges of him who was the bearer of the homely message reconciled her to its import.

"I am ready, Dawkins," said she, and she rose to depart, not without putting the accustomed shilling into Betty's hand.

"Thank you, miss; you are always so thoughtful. Will you have my market-cloak, miss, it's very decent?"

Miss Emily declined, with a gracious smile, the proffered metamorphosis.

"There are some forms that cannot be hidden," said the young man; "I should know Miss Pluffy anywhere, even under the disguise of a market-cloak."

"I am not the eldest Miss Pluffy, sir; my name is Emily Eleonora."

"Emily Eleonora! a most euphonious combination! And mine is—I beg your pardon, my good man"—for, in announcing himself, with a respectful bow, he had stepped back upon the parti-coloured gentleman's toes, and Miss Emily Eleonora lost the important noun substantive that should have followed the graceful inclination of the person.

"Is this to be the last, the only day of my happiness?" he exclaimed, rather than asked.

"I hope it will be fine to-morrow," said Miss Emily, as if she heard him not. "I wanted to speak to you, Betty, about getting your little girl into the school, but I have not time now."

"Thank you kindly, miss ; it will be a great help to us."

"I must come to-morrow, Betty, at any rate," said the young man, with a triumphant smile ; "I want your husband to look at the horse I was riding the other day ; he got a stone in his off-hind foot, just by Creykedale turnpike, and he has gone lame ever since."

He raised his hat, as he spoke, with an air of reverence, and took the road towards Cambridge, whilst Miss Emily Eleonora Pluffy pursued her solitary way and mysterious musings to Gormanton.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

THE day has been cheerful, but I cannot say altogether agreeable ; for whilst we were sitting at dinner with our young guest, Allspice, the grocer, sent in his half-year's account. It was a little more than we expected ; although we always enter everything we get into the house-book as soon as it comes in ; but we found the prices of each article raised ; still, with respect to the quantities, his account tallied exactly with our own. He wrote a note with the account, to request payment, if convenient, as he was just then in want of money. I felt obliged to him for having had the delicacy not to send a verbal message to that effect, as many other tradespeople would have done ; but he is always well-behaved and respectful. The whole account comes to one pound sixteen shillings. I went to him as soon as we had dined, in the hope of persuading him to take half now, and wait for the other half till Easter ; but, though mild, he is determined : he said, indeed, that if he could have waited for any one, it would have been for me ; but that he had a bill to meet in three days, which required him to look up all his resources, small as well as large ; that his credit was at stake ; that with a tradesman credit was subsistence ; and that, under such circumstances he should feel himself justified in having recourse to the law for such debts

as he might find himself unable to recover by other means. The very mention of law seemed to curdle my blood in an instant. I came home for the money, and sent Margaret back with it without loss of time, and she paid him the amount in full. I have now only three pounds two shillings in the world. Mr. Shirley did not mention his debt, though he looked somewhat uneasy when he saw Lucy give me the bill. God grant that he may be able to repay me speedily, or I know not what may become of us ! But if thou dost not know, O Thomas ! O man of little faith ! doth not thy Heavenly Father know ? Why, then, is thy soul cast down, and why is it disquieted within thee ? Is thy poverty a crime ? No,—it is the dispensation of Heaven ! Will it, then, be visited on thee as guilt ? Surely not—

“ For the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.”

“ For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth ; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.”

Thus it is that the word of the All-Wise and All-Powerful abounds with the most condescending and the most tender assurances that the Lord careth for the poor ; and, indeed, in the course of my spiritual ministry, I have repeatedly seen instances of their being favoured under the most trying circumstances of sickness as well as of poverty, with such a blessed frame of mind as the rich might well, if they could guess at it, deem more than an equivalent for all their possessions. Yes, I have seen this, and been edified by the submission of these humble representatives of their Lord in their earthly trials ; yet I, who am his minister, who profess to teach his will, and ought to give the example of resignation to it,—I dare to repine, even to distrust !

Alas ! what worse than heathen darkness we all abide in, as far as an actual living faith in the care of Divine Providence is concerned ! Nay, verily, the heathens had the advantage over us, for they had, at any rate, a blind submission to Fate, but we have neither resignation nor trust ;—we ask every day for our daily bread, but which of us is contented to look calmly to the morrow, in the full confidence of receiving the quotidian supply that may be sufficient

for his needs? Do we not all, on the contrary, feel troubled in mind at the least appearance of uncertainty, and say, with the murmuring Israelites, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?"

CHAPTER XIII.

PERPLEXITIES.

"BROTHER," said Miss Emily Eleonora Pluffy, after she had discussed half her dinner in silence, "does Mr. Shirley keep a horse?"

"What a very odd question, my dear," said her mamma.

"Odd or not," said her brother, "it is still odder that I cannot answer it. I have heard him call out—

" 'A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse! ' "

but whether that was a sign he had one, or wanted one, I cannot say. I have seen him on horseback, too, but I think it was one of Lord Orville's."

"It is not very likely," said the doctor, "that Mr. Shirley should keep one; people like him can very rarely keep themselves, much less anything else."

"But may I ask you why you make the inquiry," said Augustus; "do you wish to ride out with him?"

"I thought I might have seen him," she replied, colouring.

"Don't talk so absurdly, Augustus," interrupted the doctor; "it is not very likely *my daughter* would wish to make acquaintance with a player, whatever Mr. Slender's may choose to do. If you had been speaking of Mr. Courtney or Lord Orville, it would have been a different matter."

"Is Lord Orville a Scotchman?" asked Miss Emily Eleonora, more and more perplexed as to the name and station of "the hero of the cottage," as she had internally denominated him.

"No; his father is an English peer, but his mother was a Scotch lady, and I believe he has some estates, in her own right, somewhere among the Grampian Hills. I wish, by-

the-by, he would ask me down there for a month's shooting among the blackcocks."

"I wish he would, with all my heart," said the doctor, brightening at the idea; "I would willingly pay carriage for everything you could kill."

"Ah!" said Miss Emily; "that was what he meant, then, when he talked of the Grampian Hills."

"Emily!" exclaimed Miss Pluffy. "When did you hear Lord Orville talk about the Grampian Hills? You don't know him, even by sight."

"Did I say anything about Lord Orville? I was not thinking of what I was talking about. Pray let us leave the table; what an age we have been at dinner. I wonder whether it rains. Do you think it will be fine to-morrow?"

"I hope it will," said Miss Pluffy, "for Augustus says Mr. Courtney talked of calling; and perhaps he may bring Lord Orville with him."

Miss Emily's heart gave a sudden flutter, that sent her eyes towards her dessert-plate with becoming confusion.

"I declare, Emily blushes," said her brother. "She has made up her mind, I see, to be Lady Orville. In that case, however, you should have been walking with me this morning, Emmy, instead of playing the romantic at that drunken blacksmith's cottage; you would have had an opportunity, then, of opening your battery upon the hero, for I met him in the lane not five minutes before I came in to dinner."

"Yes; and your stopping that five minutes to talk to him spoiled the heart," said the doctor. "Did you not perceive, my dear, that it was not so hot as it should be, and that the stuffing, too, was a little heavy?"

Miss Emily durst not trust her voice with any reply to her brother's raillery: the allusion to the cottage had alarmed her as much as his mention of having met Lord Orville had delighted her. It must have been just after the "interesting stranger" had taken leave of her: he had turned down the lane—it led to Cambridge—*ergo*, he and Lord Orville must be one and the same individual. Now, at any rate, she had an advantage over her sister—she had made the first impression; and, in lovers' creeds, first impressions are always a leading article of faith. Then, too, she trembled to think

how strange, how mysterious it would have appeared, had Augustus happened to pass by the cottage a few minutes sooner, just when Lord Orville—for it must, indeed, be he himself—was looking in her face with such beseeching eyes. In short, she found herself, to her most exquisite delight, plunged all at once into the perplexities and uncertainties, and “conflicting emotions,” as is the orthodox phrase in such cases, of a secret attachment. Yes, secret; for she had made up her mind it must be kept secret, lest the tyranny of her parents—for all heroines have tyrannical parents—or the jealousy of her sister—“a cruel sister she”—should forbid its continuance. She forgot that it was not very likely any objections would be raised by any one connected with her against an acquaintance with Lord Orville, whatever might have been alleged against the slightest knowledge of Mr. Shirley. But when was common sense ever yet on terms of good-fellowship with romance? Not that we wish to quarrel with romance; it is, after all, in our eyes, at least, a more natural and a more excusable failing or feeling in the young than that worldly, calculating spirit of self-interest and self-aggrandizement which it is the tendency of all the modes of modern society, and the whole range of modern fiction, to inspire. Mothers need no longer be afraid that modern novel-reading may make their daughters romantic, as far as the sighing for love and a cottage may be concerned. No; it may make them affected, artificial, pedantic, worldly-minded, ambitious; it may inspire them with a desire to secure the enjoyments of wealth or the distinctions of a leader in some circle of fashion, real or pretended, metropolitan or provincial, and to obtain them by the trifling sacrifice of marrying a man they care nothing about, in order that they may be privileged to make themselves conspicuous by receiving the attentions of admirers more to their fancy; but as to engendering in them any dangerous disregard for outward splendours, or any undue prepossession in favour of the suggestions of the heart over the considerations of dress, dissipation, and precedence, there is not any risk to be apprehended.

Miss Emily Eleonora's romance, however, had been derived less from the novels than the poetry of the day, on which so many young ladies, who affect to be too wise for novel-read-

ing, form their tastes, their minds, and characters ; and even that romance was in itself more amiable than Miss Pluffy's worldliness. Whether "the hero of the cottage" were actually Lord Orville, or Mr. Shirley, or Mr. anybody else, it was with himself that she was really captivated. She wished he might be Lord Orville, because she had, ever since she had heard her brother talk of that young nobleman, made him a sort of ideal personification of what she fancied would constitute a most delectable lover ; for with young ladies like Miss Emily Eleonora, it is always the lover they are delineating, never the husband ; but, should it have been proved to her, at that moment, that he was only Mr. Shirley, she would still, under her present impressions, have exclaimed,—

"Fame, wealth, and titles, what are ye to love?"

and would have been just as often popping her head behind the window-curtains in the course of the evening, and examining the cloudy sky and the misty-looking moon, to see whether they portended foul or fair weather for the next day.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

WE have been a little cheered to-day by seeing Margaret in her *new gown*. She looked charmingly in it ; but she took it off again as soon as we had told her how well it became her, for she has resolved not to put it on, in earnest, till New-Year's Day, and then she will go to church in it. Every night she brings me her little account of the expenses of the day : it is wonderful how small a sum she makes suffice. We have come to a resolution, however, to go to bed at eight o'clock, to save fire and candle. It is no great sacrifice, for I can compose my sermons, and enter into holy meditations, as well in the dark as in the light ; and my daughters often talk to each other in bed till midnight.

We have, it seems, such a stock of potatoes, turnips, and cabbages, with the remnant of the bacon into the bargain, that we want little more than flour, and Margaret thinks we may get six or eight weeks over without contracting any

debts. If she can contrive this, it will certainly be a masterpiece of good management. We are now, also, in daily hope of Mr. Shirley's performance of his promise, as a man of honour, in sending me back my cash. Sometimes I feel a momentary distrust of his steadiness; but if Margaret perceives this, she is ready to scold me. Notwithstanding her disapprobation of his profession, she will not hear a word derogatory to the character of this young player. He is very often the subject of our conversation. The girls talk of him incessantly—more especially Lucy: his acquaintance has been, indeed, quite an event in the uniform retirement of our life; it will, I dare say, furnish matter for our discourse for six months after he has left this part of the country. It is amusing to see how angry Margaret is when Lucy slyly throws out any sarcasm against the stage, by way of drawing her into a reply. She then repeats all she has ever heard or read of concerning the elevating tendency of dramatic poetry; of the wealth and honours celebrated performers have gained; and the high society they have been admitted into. She adds that no doubt Mr. Shirley is an excellent player, his figure being so much in his favour, and his language so elegant, and so correct.

"Yes," replies Lucy, laughing, "he said you were an angel."

"And you too," cries Margaret.

"Yes," continues Lucy; "that was, that you might not be without a fit attendant."

While they thus joke and rally each other, I cannot help listening to them, poor things, with all a father's anxieties. What prospect have I of seeing them fixed before I die? Margaret is fit for anything. She is pretty, graceful, an excellent manager, and well-taught in everything that I could instruct her in; but all Creykedale knows that we are poor,—that is quite enough for us to be thought nothing of; and there is scarcely even a tradesman in the place who would give his consent to his son's marrying her. The only advantage she derives from her pretty face and sweet voice is, that everybody looks at her and listens to her with pleasure. Mr. Allspice, for example, when she paid him his money, made her a present of a pound of almonds and raisins, and told her how sorry he was that he had been obliged to press me

for payment ; nay, what was more, he added, that if I chose to continue dealing with him, he would willingly give me credit till Easter. I am sure he would not have said as much to me if I had paid the bill myself.

But, alas ! if I were to die, who would take the charge of these poor orphan girls—who ?—do I ask myself the question ?

He who calleth himself “a father of the fatherless.” “He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him. He, also, will hear their cry, and will save them.”

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNEXPECTED RENCONTRE.

“—— The morning lowered,
And heavily in clouds came on the day,
Big with the fate of Cæsar and of Rome.”

—In other words, the morning, so important to Miss Emily Eleonora Pluffy’s happiness, arrived, in the form of that amiable *mélange* of drizzle and fog, yclept a Scotch mist. She, however, found out that it was rather mild than otherwise, and prepared accordingly to sally forth at her accustomed hour.

“My dear,” said Mrs. Pluffy, “surely you are not going out in such a dark, dull, drizzly day as this ?”

“Oh,” replied Miss Emily—

“ ‘ I like this warring of the elements,
It suits the gloomy temper of my soul.’ ”

“Don’t talk such nonsense, Emily,” said her mamma sharply, “It does not suit the temper of mine at all to let you go out in such weather, spoiling all your things ;—your velvet pelisse will not be fit to be seen on Sunday.”

“I will put on my cloak,” said the young lady, consoling herself for the necessity by remembering that there were “some forms that could not be disguised.” In fact, hers was exactly of the tall and taper description which looks well in that sort of envelope so trying to ladies of a more dumpy stature. Accordingly she equipped herself very becomingly

à la Siberienne; then, turning to her sister, said, in as careless a tone as she could assume, resting her hope of an answer in the negative on account of the weather—

“Would you like to walk, Augusta, I am only going to Betty’s cottage?”

“No, indeed,” replied Miss Pluffy; “I am not so fond of going to cottages at any time; and such a day as this certainly will not tempt me;—besides, though it is not very fit for ladies to be seen out of doors in such weather, it may not be bad enough to keep gentlemen in the house; and as it is possible Mr. Courtney, and even Lord Orville, may call, I should not choose to be out of the way.”

“You are quite right, my dear,” said the prudent mother, “and I think it is rather foolish in Emily to go out when we expect visitors.”

The conscious fair one, thus rebuked, exhibited at that moment a picture of irresolution very like that of the patient animal that found himself between two bundles of hay. If the “interesting stranger” should indeed prove to be Lord Orville, and she should miss seeing him at the Rectory, by running to take the chance of meeting him at the cottage!—but if it should be only Mr. Shirley—for one or the other she had made up her mind it must be,—why, then, it behoved her the more to go, because she certainly could never hope to see him by staying at home; and he would be so disappointed, and it would be base and cruel to sacrifice him to Lord Orville, merely because his lordship was richer; for more amiable, she had already made up her mind, no one could be. So, in the true spirit of romance, she decided on the irrational side of the question, palliating her obstinacy, which seemed somewhat unaccountable in the eyes of her mamma and sister, with an excuse that she had promised “poor Betty” to settle about getting her little girl into the school.

“And I have got a frock for her, too,” she added, “made out of my last year’s merino, and she expects it to-day; and the poor child will be so disappointed, and so will Betty too, and I cannot bear to break anything like an appointment, even though it may not be made exactly in words.”

The conclusion of her speech, at any rate, was true enough; and, scarcely believing her good fortune at having succeeded

in securing and accounting for her solitary walk, she set forth upon it in a delightful flutter of expectation.

"I shall send the umbrella for you if the rain comes on, as I think it will ; but, at all events, do not be too late for dinner," said Mrs. Pluffy to her as she was going out ; then turning, when she had shut the door, to her eldest daughter, she finished her speech with "Poor Emmy ! she has a good heart, that's certain ; she looks as happy to go to Betty's cottage, on a kind errand, as many girls would at going to a party at the Vice-Chancellor's."

"Well, I must say I think it is very foolish," said Miss Pluffy, "to go poking about among poor people, running the risk of catching fevers, and calling them off their work, and making them lose their time ; and after all they never really like one a bit the better for it. They think of nothing but what they can get by making up dismal stories ;—besides, it is so like a parcel of evangelical misses ; it may be all very well for girls like the Slenders, but I do declare, I think it is quite inconsistent for the daughters of a High-Church dignitary like papa."

The elements seemed to favour Miss Emily's heroism, for, by the time she had proceeded a quarter of a mile on her way, the day cleared, and a light breeze assisted the sun, struggling through the clouds, to drive off the rain and disperse the fog. She quickened her pace involuntarily—yet, arrived within sight of the cottage, she slackened it ; she wondered whether she was earlier than the day before. No young woman was ever yet conscious of an appointment without an instinctive shrinking from the possibility of being the first to arrive at the place of rendezvous. She had salved over to her conscience the rencontre she was anticipating, under the pretence that she had actual business at the cottage, but she could not disguise from herself that certainly she should not have turned her steps towards it that morning had she been sure of seeing no one under its roof but its humble occupants.

Availing herself of her habit of familiarity with the place, she went through the little side-gate to enter at the back-door, as she was in the habit of doing, it saving a few steps of distance ; but lo ! as she glanced her eyes towards the leaded casement that looked upon the little plot of garden,

she indistinctly saw, with his back to it, a male figure, seated by a lady, who had also her back to the window, but whose bonnet being off, exhibited a graceful head, partially covered with a small lace cap, from which two or three ebon ringlets strayed down her slender neck of ivory whiteness. The gentleman had his arm round her waist, and she ever and anon reclined her head upon his shoulder, and seemed, by the raising of her handkerchief towards her eyes, to be in tears, whilst her companion was as evidently in the act of consoling her.

What a sight for the astonished Emily Eleonora ! She stole into the house to ask Betty who the lady was, for the gentleman she too surely felt must be the same she had seen the day before, and all her thought was to learn the name of her rival, and then to return home unseen, and bury within her own breast the entire history of the meeting—the parting—the appointment—the disappointment ; all, in short, and everything connected with the treacherous, the ungrateful Lothario who, most likely presuming on her being kept at home by the weather, was thus paying his devoirs, and uttering perfidious protestations to some equally credulous object, in the very same spot, nay, in the very same chair—for there were but two in the room,—where he had sat and “sighed and looked unutterable things.”

It seemed as if every living thing belonging to the cottage had disappeared to leave the lovers to themselves. Betty was nowhere to be seen—the children were all out of the way—even the cat was missing—and the sound of the anvil was not to be heard.

Miss Emily Eleonora felt very awkwardly situated. She durst not go back as she had come in, by the side-gate, for fear of being seen as she passed the window ; she durst not open the front door lest she might draw attention to her exit ; she durst not stay where she was, for fear of being discovered, and appearing in the contemptible character of a listener. Even as she stood deliberating, she was pained by involuntarily hearing words never meant to meet her ear—and certainly in the frame of mind in which she was at that moment, not the most musical that could have fallen upon it.

“Can you imagine, my dear Julia, that I do not feel for you !” said the gentleman, “have I not told you that my

affection is unaltered ? Be but advised by me, and all may yet be well."

The lady sobbed out, "We have never been separated before—it is the first time I have felt the misery of concealment."

Miss Emily Eleonora's hair stood on end. She had gratitude enough, whilst she heaved a sigh of sympathy for the young person with whose secret grief she was thus involuntarily become acquainted, to put up a prayer of thankfulness that the case was not her own.

"Who has felt the misery, the disgrace of your concealment more than I have done," said the young man, in a tone of reproach ; "but I will not wound you, my beloved, by any further allusion to the past—our troubles will soon be over."

Poor Miss Emily felt a faintness coming over her ; she feared she might fall to the earth, yet to give her faithless *incognito* one reproachful farewell look, and sink insensible at his feet, would be something so effective, so entirely *en règle*, that instinctively she rushed, or rather staggered into his presence, and beheld Clement Courtney ! The relief this discovery afforded her entirely dispelled her momentary indisposition. He started up, evidently much embarrassed. "Miss Emily," he exclaimed, then, recollecting himself, he came towards her, and taking her hand, asked after the family, and professed his admiration of her courage in venturing out in such weather ; forgetting that the same remark might apply to his companion, who, drawing her shawl hastily around her, and turning her head away, seemed resolutely determined to get by heart the rules of the Temperance Society, which Jim Blacksmith had, in a drunken frolic, nailed against the wall near the window. Miss Emily's remaining paleness gave place to a deep tinge, as she repeated the urgency of her business with Betty and her little girl.

"I fear you will have to wait some time for the good woman," said Courtney, "as we have been obliged to do, for the worthy knight of the anvil—he is at the public house as usual ; Betty sent her children for him, one after another, till out of patience with none of them coming back, she dragged the youngest hope of the family out of the cradle, and set off with him in her arms : so, here we are, waiting her husband's good pleasure to put a lynch-pin in the wheel

of our chaise, which chose to break down just as we turned the corner of the lane here."

Miss Emily, very thankful she had got off so well, said that in that case she would not wait, as she should be expected at home; and with a glance at the lady, who was still busy with the Temperance Society, and a smiling "good morning" to Courtney, she turned towards home, all amazement at the scene she had witnessed, and the ease with which Courtney, at first so evidently annoyed at being interrupted in his *tête-à-tête* with his fair companion, had afterwards included her with himself in the *we* and *our*, which so perfectly indicated their familiarity with each other. There was something, too, in the young lady's figure—slight and delicate though she seemed, which struck Miss Emily Eleonora, in the glance she gave it, ere so closely enveloped in the shawl, as being more like that of a married woman than of a girl, such as she evidently was in years.

"'Twas strange, 'twas passing strange," Miss Emily Eleonora mentally exclaimed—all heroines are in the habit of mentally exclaiming; she did not, however, "ever and anon vow revenge," but contented herself with drawing a very rational inference from what she had seen and heard; viz., that neither her sister nor herself need give themselves any further trouble concerning Clement Courtney, in the way of matrimony. It was quite evident that his thoughts, whatever they might be, on that interesting subject in general, did not point to the Rectory in particular. As she was considering within herself whilst she *returned upon her steps* (it is well occasionally to use foreign idioms, it shows that one has travelled; or, if the reader be old-fashioned enough to like plain English better, we will say, as she went back by the same way that she came), she met poor Betty all in tears, her baby in her arms, her *walkable* little ones dragging at each side of her.

"Why, Betty, what's the matter?" she asked, with real feeling, for certainly no one at that moment was within sight or hearing to motive either her manner or her tone.

"Matter, miss, why there's always summut matter with me, I think; though, to be sure, as to that I mayn't be worse off than my neighbours; but there's that good-for-naught husband of mine—though if it was not for that there nasty

"Cat and Bagpipes," he wouldn't be so bad neither,—but there he is at this time o' day, when he should be at his work, drinking and singing like a trooper;—and as for that, he can sing well enough, to be sure, when he's sober—he might have been clerk at Gormanton, years ago, if he'd kept himself steady." And here Betty wept afresh at the thought of the honours he had cast away, by the too active indulgence of his social propensities.

"Well, Betty," said Miss Emily, good-naturedly, "cheer up; you know it is not anything new, perhaps James"—she never called him Jim, it sounded so vulgar—"may see his error in time."

"I don't know what he'll see, miss; he often says he sees trouble; and I thinks to myself sometimes that his drink will get the better of him, strong as he is, and that he will be going off in happyplexy, and then what will become of me a poor, lone widow-woman with all these little ones!" and here she wept afresh, and kissed the baby;—"and then, he's making our biggest lad as bad as himself: I sent him for his father, because young Mr. Courtney's chaise broke down just by our door, and it would have been a very good job, for Mr. Courtney always pays handsome like, for everything; and, to be sure, instead of coming back himself, what does he do but keeps the lad along with him, and there I found him, his little head in a pint-pot, just like his father—the woe's me! as old cock crows, young one larns—bad larning for him and for me too,—but that's always our Jim's way; if anybody gives him a shilling, he's sure to clap another to it, to spend in drink; so we are none of us the better for anything he gets;—though, to be sure, for the matter of that, he's fluent enough, with what he gets, when he keeps himself sober. I often says if he'd been a great lord, we might all of us have eaten gold, if we'd a-fancied it."

"And who gave him the money to-day, that he has made such a bad use of?" said Miss Emily, no way indifferent to the poor woman's grievance; for, unlike her sister, she thought the poor women had as good a right to complain as the rich, and even to stand, sometimes, for ten minutes together, with their hands before them, without being rebuked for wasting their time, by the privileged idle, who

"Just do nothing all the day,"

and that for day after day, to the end of their lives. The answer rewarded her for the disinterested sympathy that had prompted her question.

"Why, miss, it was that nicest young gentleman, Mr. Norval, him as you met at our house yesterday."

Miss Emily coloured up to her eyes at the plainness of the statement.

"He was with us again, afore ten o'clock this morning, and he kept fretting himself about weather, and talking about stars being unlucky; but I did not know what he meant; for, as for that, it warn't likely he could see stars at that time o'day. However, he stayed, and stayed, and kept looking out of door every minute, like, till he see'd young Mr. Courtney's chaise a-breaking down, and then he went to ask him if he could help him, and when young Mr. Courtney said it was nothing, and he had better say naught about it at Cambridge, like, he just talked and laughed a bit with him, and the young lady, like, and then he went away; but he seemed to have a strange mind to stay, and he kept a-looking back, and a-talking to himself as long as he was in sight of house."

Miss Emily's heart swelled as Betty spoke,—whether with regret, or pleasure, our female readers must determine; we ourselves opine that it might be a mixture of each.

Betty was quite physiognomist enough to see that her theme was pleasing to her hearer; so she wisely continued it.

"Poor young gentleman he seemed so disappointed, somehow; he axed a power of questions about you, miss; and I told him what a nist young lady you was—I'm sure I may well say so."

"Oh, Betty," said Miss Emily, extracting her purse from her reticule, "but you must not talk about me to strangers;—besides, he could have no interest in hearing anything about a person he has only seen once; I suppose, however, he did not pay much attention to what you said."

"Yes, miss, but he did, though; and he kept repeating verses, like; he often does, when he comes—he knows such a power of fine speeches, and songs too, and sometimes he makes my Jim sing; and then he takes him off to the very *moral* of him. Sometimes he's as merry and light-hearted as if he was one of us poor folks; and sometimes, to be sure,

he's grand and dull, like, as if he was a lord—and he may be one for aught I know."

"He may, indeed," thought Miss Emily; and with fresh hopes of the eligibility and feasibility of her conquest, she took leave of Betty by putting a shilling into her hand, and returned to the Rectory.

On her arrival at home she put on an unusual degree of vivacity, in order to hide the disappointment she could not but feel at the failure of her expedition, and related her meeting—so different from that which she had secretly anticipated—with Clement Courtney and his companion. Miss Pluffy's complexion became almost as purple as her father's at her sister's recital.

"Well," said she, "I do think that Blacksmith's cottage is quite a nuisance: I am sure it is a meeting-place."

Miss Emily felt her cheeks catch a tinge of her sister's warmth. "It is abominable in that Betty," she continued, "to allow it; and very odd in Mr. Courtney, I think. What kind of a young lady can she be, to go and sit with him in such a place as that!"

"Why, sister, as to that, I have told you it was an accident."

"O yes, I daresay—I admire such accidents; I suppose it's quite accidental too, that Mr. Courtney himself has scarcely been in our house three times the last three weeks, and used to be here every day—morning, noon, and night. I'm sure he's welcome enough to keep away, for me, and that I shall take pretty good care to show him."

"It is very provoking, to be sure, my dear," said the prudent mother; "but as to showing him that you are vexed about it, I certainly should not, if I were in your place, make any sort of difference in my behaviour to him; it would, perhaps, only make him fancy you were mortified; and that is not at all the way to bring him back again."

"No," said Miss Emily—

"'Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.'"

"Who wants to tie him, I should be glad to know?" said Miss Pluffy, scornfully; "perhaps you judge others by yourself."

"Well, my dear, don't be angry," said Mrs. Pluffy; "there's

no disgrace in either of you thinking Mr. Courtney a very amiable young man ; with his fortune and connexions, and his interest too, that might do so much for your poor papa, just now, when he's so anxious about his expenses, and wants to get his new pinery finished ; and perhaps, after all, there may be nothing at all in his being at the cottage with a young lady ; perhaps it was one of the Miss Thorntons,—you know he's very intimate with their brother, and he might be going to dine at the Hall—he very often does ; Fanny says she did not see her face.”

“And why did she turn it away, then ?” said Miss Pluffy sullenly ; “people never hide their faces unless they are ashamed of themselves. But, however, it's nothing to me ; I don't know why I waste my time in talking about such nonsense ;” and tears of mortification gushed into her eyes as she concluded. She resumed her embroidery, however, and after traversing sundry leaves and scallops with silent perseverance, looked up and said, “What a long time it is since Mr. Muggins has been here : I wonder papa never asks him to dine now.”

“Why, you know, my dear, you girls said the last time he was here that he was so vulgar, you were ashamed of Mr. Courtney's meeting him at our table ; but, to be sure, he's a very respectable man, and very well off too—and I did hear that his aunt, the grocer's widow—I've forgotten her name—in Magdalen Lane, has left him three or four hundred a year more.”

“I heard so too, this morning,” said Miss Pluffy ; “Simpson told me whilst she was doing my hair.”

“Well, I think the Doctor ought to invite him,” said Mrs. Pluffy ; “I don't imagine there will be any risk of Mr. Courtney's meeting him just now—for as you say, right enough, he certainly has not come lately half so often as he used to do.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

WE had an event yesterday which has almost effaced from the minds of my girls the memorable visit of Mr. Shirley. We had two strangers at church—a lady and gentleman.

They came in late—indeed, it was at the end of the second lesson ; they walked up the middle aisle, and seemed a little disconcerted at finding the service so far advanced. The clerk leaned forward, and beckoned them to come into our own pew at the side of the reading-desk. The lady hesitated, but my dear Margaret had by this time opened the door for them, with her sweet smile, and they accordingly entered. The lady was in deep mourning, probably for some recent loss, for she wept abundantly during my discourse, which was from the 103rd psalm :—

“As for man, his days are as grass ; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth :

“For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone ; and the place thereof shall know it no more.”

It was a funeral sermon for the father of two poor children, doubly orphans by his death, as their mother died only a month ago of a rapid consumption, caused by overheating herself last harvest. The uncertainty of life, and the necessity of our standing prepared to relinquish the objects of our dearest affections at a moment's warning, when summoned from us to a higher state of being, formed, of course, the theme of my discourse, which I concluded with a recommendation of the helpless orphans thus deprived of both their natural protectors to the charity of such of my parishioners as might be blessed with the means of aiding them in their hour of need. The lady, as Margaret afterwards informed me, changed colour frequently towards the end of my sermon. The gentleman, who was exceedingly attentive to her, and watched every turn of her countenance, gave her a smelling-bottle, and supported her head on his shoulder ; but all would not do, and whilst I was giving the blessing, my daughter found that she was in a fainting state. The gentleman was exceedingly distressed, and my girls much alarmed. Whilst Margaret took off her gloves, and unfastened her mantle, to give her air, Lucy flew to me in the vestry to inform me of what had happened. I ran to the pew, with my gown half on and half off ; the moment I cast my eyes on the poor creature I saw that she was within a very short period of becoming a mother—yet she did not look older than my Margaret. She was beautiful in her state of insensibility: delicate features, long dark eyelashes,

and hair of raven black, that had come down in taking off her bonnet, and fell about her temples in extraordinary profusion. I sent the sexton for a glass of water; she was able to swallow a little, and began to recover herself.

"The fatigue of the walk," said she, looking up with a sweet consoling expression, in her husband's face. He was as handsome as herself, and so like her that they might have passed for brother and sister. "We will have a chaise back, dear Julia," said he, adding, as he turned towards me, "I suppose, sir, we can get a chaise at the 'Roebuck?'"—"No nearer, I am afraid, sir, than Cambridge," I replied; "but if you and the lady will condescend to walk to the parsonage, my daughters," presenting them as I spoke, "and myself will be most happy to afford you a resting-place, and such small refreshment as it may be in our power to lay before you."

My poor Margaret blushed, for she felt the responsibility of the housekeeper upon her; and on Sundays we make it a rule not to dine at all, but to have an early tea instead. It saves trouble, and gives me more time for our school; moreover, it makes me more alert for afternoon service. Nevertheless, she begged the lady would come with us, and tears of sympathy stood in her own dear eyes as she entreated her. The lady looked earnestly at her, and, pressing her hand, said, "Yes, I will with pleasure, if it is not far; I feel quite better now—quite happy again; but I certainly durst not venture to walk any distance."—"The parsonage is close by," said Margaret.—"Shall I carry you?" asked her husband, laughingly.—"No, I have given you too much trouble already," she replied, with a smile that made his countenance radiant in a moment; "I can walk such a little way very well."

Accordingly we left the church all together. My daughters assisted the young lady to take off her cloak and bonnet; meanwhile the young gentleman—for, in fact, though man and wife, as they certainly are, they looked mere boy and girl—said he would step to the "Roebuck," to get a boy to go to Cambridge for a chaise, "and I will order the landlady, if Mr. Slender will excuse the liberty," bowing to me as politely as if I had been a bishop, or, at any rate, the rector instead of the curate, "to send some little thing or

other, whatever she may have had, by way of luncheon—for you will want something, my love,” looking towards his companion, “and perhaps Mr. Slender does not dine till late; you see, sir, how we presume on your kindness.”

“We could make the lady a cup of tea,” said Margaret, in a humble tone, and with a downcast look that ought to have clouded the brow of innocence. Lucy whispered to her—“Or,” said she, “if the lady could eat an egg, and a little piece of toasted bread, or a morsel of toasted cheese.”——“O, the dear cheese! a Welsh rarebit, is it not? The very thing I could like,” said the young lady. “How kind you are! it is so good!”——“Ah, but my dear Julia, I fear it might not be good for you,” said her husband, as I believe him to be; “and, besides, we will not *derange*” (an odd kind of phrase, I thought) “Mr. Slender, as it is Sunday.” So saying, he darted out of the house, to order something from the “Roebuck,”—and I was not sorry that he should do so, for though, as I told the lady, I hoped she would feel kindly welcome to all my humble board afforded, I yet was aware it would seem but unpalatable fare to one like her; and, moreover, the preparation of it, small as it might be, would have taken my girls away from her, which would have been a pity, for they were all eyes and ears—Lucy in particular; they so seldom see anybody, poor things.

The young gentleman soon returned, with the information that he had sent for a chaise, and ordered something as like a dinner as the house could provide on so short a notice.

“It is very kind in you, sir,” he continued, “to permit us to eat it in this pretty parlour, among these balsams and geraniums, instead of that smoky hole at the ‘Roebuck.’ I am sure, Julia, you would have been ill again, there, in a minute.”

“O, yes, I should enjoy it a hundred times more here.”

“And a hundred times to that,” said the young man, “if Mr. Slender and the young ladies will favour us by partaking of it.”

I assented at once, for I thought ceremony with such amiable young people would be ridiculous and unfriendly: I told him that, as a general habit, we did not dine on Sundays, but that on so unexpected and pleasing an occasion, we should all be happy to break through our accustomed rule.

The girls soon made the necessary preparations for the table, and dear Margaret contrived to add somewhat of elegance to its neatness, by mixing a few winter roses with the bright green leaves of the holly, and putting them in a little china jar in the centre.

The lady admired everything she saw. "What pretty table-mats; are they of your own working? What a pretty simple shape that basket; and how delicate those little salt-spoons of mother-of-pearl—I should like a set exactly the same. And how delightfully retired you are here—retired, yet not dull. Is it not a charming place, Henry? it reminds me of poor mamma's dairy cottage she was so fond of!"—and then the tears came into the poor young lady's eyes, and under pretence of whispering to her some consoling words, the young man kissed them away. It was very pleasing to see such youthful and innocent attachment. It reminded me of my own early happy days, and I could not help sighing. Fortunately, at that moment the dinner came, and we all sat down to it with cheerful, and I may truly say, on our sides, with thankful hearts.

I had no idea good Mrs. Greensides could have produced half so much in so short a time. We had a couple of boiled fowls, with the liver sauce on which she much prides herself; a fine piece of sirloin of beef, with an apology for its having been cut; a piece of ham, with the same apology; an excellent pigeon pie, which none but a very sharp eye in household matters, like my little Lucy's, could have seen had been already opened; potted hare, a collared eel, mince pies, and a hot apple tart. It was quite a visitation feast; and, to complete it, there was a bottle of very tolerable sherry, and another of still better port. The young gentleman apologised for the absence of claret—the house afforded none, he said—which I could easily believe,—and as to the other light wines he had asked for, neither landlord nor landlady knew them, even by name. I assured him there was enough, and more than enough; and that I should have been really sorry to have seen anything more, as savouring of luxurious excess. He smiled, but made no further remark, and I then implored a blessing on this unexpected meal, in perhaps a longer grace than ordinary, for my heart was filled with thankfulness. The young lady

and gentleman were, however, very decorous in their attention to it.

Our repast was abundantly seasoned with innocent mirth: the gentleman, after taking a glass of wine with me, and thanking me for the honour, as he was pleased to express it, of my company, turning to his wife, said, "Why, Julia, this is the first dinner-party we have given since we were married, is it not?" The young lady coloured very deeply, and cast, what I thought a reproachful look at her husband; nevertheless she smiled the moment after, and said, "At any rate, I hope it will not be the last, as far as Mr. Slender and these young ladies are concerned;" and she held out her hand to Margaret, who seemed to have become, even on so short an acquaintance, quite a favourite with her. She looked, perhaps equally kindly on Lucy; but Margaret sat next her.

But, alas! all human pleasures are short—whilst we were in the height of our hilarity, and our unforeseen intercourse every minute assuming more and more of the air of old acquaintanceship, the chaise drove up to the door, and we were compelled to separate. To say the truth, I felt relieved from some anxiety at the sight of it, for the young lady's situation seemed so critical that I did not feel quite easy whilst she was in the house, lest she should, by some mischance, find herself compelled to remain under the roof of a stranger, at a moment when she would naturally have preferred her own house. On going away she took a pearl ring from her finger, and slipped it into Margaret's hand: "Wear this," said she, "for my sake; I trust we shall meet again."—"It would be a great happiness to me," said Margaret, "but I cannot hope it; I feel we are so differently situated; but if ever we do meet again, you will see how I value your gift," and she kissed it with tears in her eyes, and put it on her finger. How warm, how beautiful are the feelings of youth, when unchecked by the artificial habits of society—the suggestions of that cold and narrow prudence which it is the business of the world to inculcate.

We all shook hands at parting as affectionately as if we had been relations, instead of chance acquaintance, of three hours' standing; and when the chaise drove off, Margaret turned away, to conceal, perhaps, the lonely feelings of her

heart ; for, after all, to young people society seems the chief good, and I am quite aware that the tenderest father cannot be to a girl like a companion of her own age and sex ; but whatever sad-complexioned thoughts these reflections might have given rise to in either of our bosoms, they were speedily put to flight by Lucy, who, rushing in—for she had lingered longest at the door for a parting nod,—exclaimed, “guess where he told the chaise-boy to drive to.”——“To Cambridge, most likely,” I replied, for poor Margaret could not speak.——“No ; not actually to Cambridge, but very near it—to Barnwell ; and who do you think to, there ? Why, to Mr. Shirley’s, at Barnwell, the first house behind the trees, on the right-hand side coming in—only think ! You do not think they can be players too, do you, papa ?”

“I hope not, my child,” I replied ; “it does not seem very probable : perhaps they are relations of Mr. Shirley’s. I think the young lady has a look of him—still it is not likely that he should have relations in the rank of life they evidently belong to.”——“Perhaps they may be friends, or intimate acquaintance,” said Margaret ; “players, you say, dear papa, often have friends of rank superior to their own.”

Still we were amazed how it could be ; but there was no time to comment on the matter, for the last bell was ringing for afternoon service, and I had to hurry into the church, with more betrayal of haste than was seemly to my office or agreeable to my feelings.

I found a guinea in the poor-box—it must have been put there by the stranger, for the orphans, and I shall dedicate it to their use accordingly. Our cup of tea was enlivened by our chat about our guests. “How beautiful the lady is,” said Margaret ; “I have seen some one like her, yet I cannot think who it is.”——“I never saw anybody like her,” said Lucy, “or anything but some of the pictures in the ‘Keepsake’ that Mrs Tittup lent us last year ; and such pictures are not a bit like real people, you know ;—and then, what a beautiful little hand she has !”

“Yes,” said Margaret, looking at her pearl ring, which, indeed, she had not ceased to admire from the moment she had put it on her finger, “this pretty ring looks very different on my hand from what it did on hers.”

“Nay,” said Lucy, affectionately, “you have as pretty a

little hand as anybody—it is not quite so white as the lady's, but then, consider how much more work it does—good little hand," and then she kissed it, and Margaret kissed her, and they began again to talk and wonder who the lady and gentleman could be, and what possible connexion they could have with Mr. Shirley. "It shows he is respectable, at any rate," said Margaret ; "for, certainly they cannot have anything to do, themselves, with the players."

I was rather surprised that the gentleman had not mentioned his name or residence, but, perhaps it never came into his head. The occurrence has, however, supplied my girls with topics for conversation for six months to come ; and when I see how much I have written about it, I am ready to think that I myself live in seclusion till I am as much astonished as they are with any incident, however trifling or unimportant in itself, that breaks the uniform tenor of our day. The fact is, that the thought of my journal falling into their dear hands when I may be no more, tempts me unconsciously into amplifying on little matters, that it may interest them to look back upon. Lucy calls it the "Creykedale Chronicles," and says it will make a volume as big as Holinshed ; "and who knows," she goes on, "but one day it may be lodged in some of the grand libraries at Cambridge, and consulted and quoted, like any other curious old manuscript."

Whatever it may be, it is all I shall ever have to leave my poor girls ; and there is something gratifying to me in the thought that it may serve to keep the remembrance of me alive in their hearts ; that the joys and sorrows therein depicted will draw forth their correspondent smiles or tears ; and that the tenderness for themselves, which they will trace in every page, will excite in them the same feelings towards their father, and preserve his name and image to to them long after he himself hath "gone hence, and is no more seen."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DINNER FROM THE "ROEBUCK."

THE appearance of a gentleman and lady at Creykedale Church, entire strangers to the congregation, was an event in itself quite singular enough to draw forth a number of conjectures and comments as to who they could be, and why they should come to hear Mr. Slender, the curate, when they might have gone to hear Doctor Pluffy, the rector.

"As for that," said the quiet man at the "Roebuck," where, as well as in many other family circles in the village, they were discussing the matter, "I once heard a bishop preach; and I must say that, bating the lawn sleeves, which, to be sure, looked very full and handsome, Mr. Slender, to my mind, makes quite as good a figure in the pulpit as he did."

"Why, my dear," said his wife, "as to that, Mr. Slender told us this very morning that 'The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.' Now, he himself, poor gentleman, is as simple as a baby in a deal of things, but then, I do believe he is a true Christian, and a doer of the Word, and preaches it to his uttermost; so, you see, it pleases the Lord to give him grace and a blessing on his ministry."

"It may be so," replied the husband; "don't you think, my dear, that there piece of beef is done enough?"

"Yes, to be sure, it's done enough, for the first time, at any rate. We shall most likely have to put it down again before the day's out. I wish people would manage to drop in at good likely hours, as they used to do. Here, now, is this here piece of beef, quite a beauty, and nobody but ourselves to sit down to it; and if we had happened not to have had a joint in the house, we should have had half a dozen customers calling out for it; but one never knows whether one goes too fast or too slow in our line."

"Well, never mind, my dear; take the beef before you, and then there will be a pair of beauties," said Mr. Greensides, his wit sharpening as he sharpened his carving-knife. His jolly, handsome help-mate smiled approvingly at the

bon-mot, when, lo ! just as she had made an incision into the inside of the sirloin—for, on principle, she never *disfigured*, as she termed it, the outside, till the latest moment,—in came the young gentleman with whom our readers have already become acquainted through the medium of "The Curate's Journal," and put the whole household on the alert by the variety and volubility of his orders.

"Mrs. Greensides, good morning !—you are Mrs. Greensides, I presume ?"

"At your service, sir ;—Betty, a fire in the next parlour."

"No, no, not for me, best or worst ; the kitchen fire is all I care about. In the first place, I want a chaise, and in the next, I want a dinner."

"Chaises, sir, we are not licensed for ; but there is my master's single-horse shay, as he goes to market in, a very comfortable thing when the head is up, and the apron pulled over your knees ; and as he would drive you himself, I don't think any of our neighbours would take any notice of it, —that is, not to inform against us."

"No, my good woman, that won't do ; I must have a regular-built chaise, and a pair of good horses ; so you must send to Cambridge instantly for one, and let it take me up at Mr. Slender's. And then, as to dinner, you must send everything you have got in the house there too—fish, flesh, and fowl,—only let everything be good of its kind, and well-dressed, and piping hot. And you, Mr. Landlord, may I ask what wines you have got in your cellar ? What are your oldest bins ?"

"They are all of an age, sir," said the quiet man ; "they were all put up the same year I came to the 'Roebuck.'"

"Well, but what have you got in them ?" said the young man, impatiently ; "can you give me anything drinkable ?"

"I have some last year's port, and a bottle or two of sherry, that I laid in ten years ago ; it's seldom asked for ; my customers generally prefer ale."

"So much the better for me," said the gentleman, offering his snuff-box to the landlord ; "send me a bottle of each. Have you any claret ?"

"Never had any, sir ; never saw any—not in my way."

"Any Frontignac, Lunel, or French wines of any sort ? Any light table wine ? Anything for dessert ?"

"Nothing more, sir, but elder and cowslip; both of my good woman's making."

"Very excellent, I dare say, but not exactly what I mean," and the young man made a slightly wry face; "however, we must make shift for once with port and sherry."

The respect of the landlady and Miss Nancy, at this condescension, was visible in their widening eyes and pursed-up mouths. As for Mr. Greensides, he was always the same: he concluded everybody knew best what suited him, and so long as it was praised and paid for, he felt just as much goodwill towards the customer that ordered a pint of beer as towards him who ordered a bottle of wine.

Mr. Greensides, after all, was a very good sort of man in his way; and really, in these odd-looking times, when, what with political cobblers, and poetical weavers, and reforming tailors, and missionary sailors, it was something uncommon and refreshing to meet with a quiet man who, if nobody found fault with his measures, found fault with nobody's, except once with his tailor's, when he made his Sunday waistcoat too tight for him.

But, mercy me!—to use Mrs. Greenside's favourite exclamation,—what a bustle was everybody thrown into at the "Roebuck," except the master, by this most unexpected order for the dinner and the chaise! Such clattering of plates, such jingling of glasses and bottles, such opening and shutting of drawers, and banging of doors, such scampering up and down stairs, such looking for all manner of things, in every place but where they ought to be, such running against one another; the voice of Mrs. Greensides heard shrilly above all other loud and uproarious sounds, like the boatswain's whistle, piping all hands to the pumps in the midst of a storm!

"You Betty, put both them fowls and that piece of ham into the pot, and clap this here beef down again to the fire; or, perhaps you'll do that, Mr. Greensides, whilst she sets potatoes on; and you can just pop that slice back again, and pat it down with the carving-knife, and put a skewer in—maybe they'll never see it's been cut;—and you, Nancy, get that pigeon pie out of the pantry, and set it in the oven, just to lighten the crust a bit."

"La, mother!" exclaimed Nancy, who was giving the four

table-spoons an extra polish, "that pie has been hotted up so often, it will be as dry as a stick."

"Yes, my girl, you are right; just raise up the lid, and put a drop of water in for gravy, and scrape that butter off that potted hare—it's got so yellow; a little fresh over it will make it look quite nice again. Dear me! if I had but known of this yesterday, I would have had things as they should be! But who can ever say, when they get up in the morning, what's for to happen before they go to bed at night."—"I'm sure I little thought, when I saw that piece of beef smoking on the table, that it would have been taken off again without any of us having a mouthful of it," said the quiet man, with something like a sigh.

"Yes, my dear, it shows 'many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip,' as my poor mother used to say; and how true, to be sure, them old sayings always is. But, however, all's for the best, and so we shall think when we come to touch the money—why, it will be a matter of thirty shillings."

"Without the wine!" added Mr. Greensides;

"Yes, and that will be nine-and-sixpence more!"

"Dear me," said Miss Nancy, "how rich the gentleman must be! I hope they'll all think the dinner good enough."

"Why, as to that," said her mother, "Mr. Slender, at any rate, won't be very difficult to please, I dare say, poor gentleman; nor the young ladies neither; and this gentleman looks very good-natured, as if he could make the best of a thing, a-time, by chance. But, however, I must give a sharp look among my preserves and pickles, and see what else I can make out. What a blessing that I've got that collared eel, and the apple pie too, just baked." And so, with odds and ends, and one thing or another, the dinner was dispatched to the parsonage, and received, as we have seen, with the greatest indulgence; indeed, we may say, "with unbounded applause;" and Miss Nancy set off, as soon as it was safely out of the house, full of glee, to walk to Cambridge to order a chaise, for which exertion she thought herself sufficiently rewarded by the anticipation of riding back in it as far as the entrance of the village.

"My dear," said Mrs. Greensides to her good man, as soon as she saw herself quietly side by side with him in the bar, and a snug little glass of creature comfort between them,

"did not you remark something rather perticular about that there gentleman as ordered the dinner?"

"I can't say I did," replied Mr. Greensides; "I thought him good-looking enough, and civil spoken—but, now that you mention it, I think he had an oddish way with his eyes."

"No, my dear, that is not what I meant, that's only a sort of short-sighted look that most of your gentlefolks have now-a-days; I don't know what it's with—people could see fast enough when I was young; but it was not his eyes I was a-thinking of, it was his hands."

"What, did you think he was one of your light-fingered ones?" said the landlord, still with an undisturbed aspect; "pity you sent the silver spoons with the things."

"Nay, my dear, what he had in his hand might be his own, and honestly come by, but I thought it was very odd—it gave me such a turn; I think I should have clean dropped down, if I hadn't dinner to think about."

"What! was it a pistol?" asked the landlord, with something more approaching to curiosity, than he was in the habit of exhibiting.

"A pistol! oh deary me! no—where would have been the use of showing a pistol at noon-day, as one may say, and you standing by the fire, Mr. Greensides, and John Ostler in sight, at the stable door; but how very odd you did not remark it—why, he offered it to you, when he was a-talking about the dinner wine."

"I don't remember his offering me anything, but a pinch of snuff."

"But did you not see anything strange in the box?—it is the box I am meaning all this time."

"I can't say," replied Mr. Greensides, very quietly, "that I saw anything in it but the snuff, which I thought had too much of some sort of perfumed smell about it to be quite to my liking."

"Ay, but the box—the gold box! deary me, Mr. Greensides, what a man you are for not taking notice of nothing."

"Yes, now you mention it, I did take notice that the box was a gold one, and handsome enough, according to my fancy."

"Handsome enough! yes, I believe it was—one does not see such a box as that every day; but, deary me, Mr. Green-

sides, didn't you remember it?—for my part I could swear to it among a thousand."

"More than I could," was the laconic reply of the quiet man.

"Dear me, Mr. Greensides, what a deal more notice I take of things than you do. Why, there's a picture, inside, of a lady almost undressed, under a tree, and a little *hangel* with wings, a tickling of her with a *harrow*."

"How could you know that?" said the good man, with real surprise; "it was not open half a minute."

"No, my dear," said Mrs. Greensides, with an air of self-complacency, "but let me alone for finding a thing out—I had a good look in that very box before to-day; I knew it again the instant he took it out of his pocket. Why, now, my dear, it's the selfsame identical box as was in that there young man's great-coat pocket as came here to see if he could get up a benefit—one of the player-folks, from Barnwell. Has it not a very odd look with it? My mind mis-gave me at the time I found it in the pocket, that he hadn't come honestly by it."

"I don't see that this here gentleman having it now makes anything against the other young chap having it then; we might as well fancy that this had not come honestly by it."

"This!" repeated Mrs. Greensides, with a look of scorn; "what, is there no difference between a gentleman like him, that orders port and sherry, and everything we've got in the house, and never asks what's to pay, and a poor shabby player that didn't even call for a pint of ale?—No; you may depend upon it that that box was not in its right place in his pocket."

"Well, it's got back to its right place now, then, it seems, my dear; so let us hope the young man saw the error of his ways, and put it back again himself, before he was found out."

"Well, I'm sure I don't want to be uncharitable, or to meddle with other peoples' affairs—if nobody talked more of their neighbours than I do, why, the world would go on quieter than it does. Now, there's poor Mr. Slender, a deal of people would say ill-natured things, like, of him and his daughters, because of that there young gentleman going there,

and coming here for such a handsome dinner, and, by-the-by, when do you think, my dear, we had better send for the dishes and spoons? Most likely the young ladies will keep what's left—natural they should, poor things! Suppose I tell John Ostler to step up and see if they've done with the things."

"Better do so, before the chaise comes; it isn't impossible that the gentleman may order another bottle of wine—and at any rate, it's better to send the bill in betimes; for, as he seems rather harum scarum, and quick, like, in everything he does, he might forget to pay, if he was in a hurry to set off."

This was a long speech for Mr. Greensides to make, and it caused his jaws to ache to such a degree that he was obliged to refresh them with a most capacious yawn, terminating in a heigh-ho! ho! a-ha! the true *diminuendo* of the gamut of the somnolency that in a few minutes exhibited its accustomed empire over him, in his evening nap—which nap, on a Sunday he always made twice its week-day length, because, as he wisely observed, it appeared to him that "we are commanded to make the Sabbath a day of rest."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LOVE-LETTER.

It will easily be believed that Doctor Pluffy's congregation was of a much more imposing description than that of Mr. Slender. Gormanton being surrounded by gentlemen's seats, their families made a brilliant show around the rector on the Sabbath; and Mrs. Pluffy took care that her own appearance and that of her daughters, as they walked solemnly up the middle aisle always one minute before the service commenced, followed by their liveried footman carrying their red-morocco gilt-leaved prayer-books, should not be inferior, in point either of fashion or expense, to that of the most aristocratic of the ladies who honoured them by an exchange of dinners once a year.

Added to these stationary aristocracies there was generally a very pretty sprinkling of young Cantabs, tempted by the love of novelty to come and look about them among the country girls. The Misses Plufly were in the habit of ascertaining at a glance the number and quality of the gownsmen in attendance; and on the same Sunday that the curate's daughters had been so surprised at the uncommon sight of two well-dressed strangers in their father's congregation, Miss Emily Eleonora was much more agitated by beholding, immediately opposite to her in the gallery, the young man whom she had the day before felt so much disappointment in not seeing at the blacksmith's cottage. She immediately cast down her eyes in a state of the greatest confusion, which was increased by her sister touching her elbow and whispering something, of which only the concluding words, "Do you see him?" fell on her ear.

"Yes—no,—I mean yes," replied Miss Emily, faintly.

"He is alone now, at any rate," continued Miss Plufly. "I hope papa will ask him to dine."

"How can he?" said Miss Emily, all astonishment at her sister's consideration,—"he does not even know him by sight."

"What are you thinking of?" said Miss Plufly, equally amazed at Miss Emily's amazement, and at the same time looking towards the object of whom she herself had been speaking. Miss Emily's eyes followed the direction of her sister's, and found that they rested on Clement Courtney, who was certainly seated "all alone by himself" in a pew opposite their own. She coloured still more deeply in thinking how unaccountable her reply must have appeared, and in her embarrassment she looked up to the gallery again, and perceived that the young man with whom it had originated was still earnestly regarding her from behind a pillar, the concealment of which he seemed glad to avail himself of, in order that he might have an opportunity of contemplating her attractions unnoticed.

"How touching!—how truly delicate!" thought Miss Emily, with a soft sigh, which, nevertheless, caught her sister's ear, and caused her to give her head a slight toss as the thought passed through her mind that Emily had not been so indifferent as she had affected to be the day before

to Clement Courtney's proceedings, when she had narrated them with such seeming unconcern.

As soon as the psalm before the sermon was given out, the "interesting stranger" in the gallery rose to join in it, and Miss Emily distinguished above the rest the tones of a voice which had lingered in her ear from her first hearing it, and which, full and melodious, now made a really scientific addition to the somewhat monotonous melody of the village choir.

The vocal performance ended, Dr. Pluffy rose, and after having made his preparatory prayer, and passed his cambric handkerchief over his face, thereby showing to advantage the diamond ring that sparkled on his little finger, he gave out his text, "Silver and gold have I none," from which he took occasion, most eloquently, to set forth all the graces and virtues attendant upon poverty, not forgetting to include among them,

"Spare fast, that with the gods doth diet,"

and every other branch of temperance, sobriety, and self-denial; dwelling with such astonishing unction and energy on the advantages to be derived to the soul from a rigorous keeping under of the body, that many of his simple-minded parishioners, gazing upwards on his rubicund complexion and portly circumference, felt inclined to pity him for the propensity to obesity, which, they imagined, must require a double share in himself of the abstinence he preached to others, in order to keep it even within the limits they beheld.

The doctor's sermons had one merit, for which his congregation was invariably ready to commend them, and which we ourselves must humbly confess to be a merit in our sinful eyes, or ears; they were always short. Their brevity was based on many cogent reasons. He did not like to fatigue his lungs, or to run the risk of overheating himself just before leaving church; he did not like to keep his horses, or his dinner, waiting; and he did not like to incur the most distant possibility of wearying the "ears polite" of any of the barons or baronets, knights or squires, who honoured him with their twenty minutes' attention. This day his discourse was even shorter than usual; for he

had a haunch of venison for dinner ; and the difference that a turn too much might make in its flavour was upon his mind all the while he was preaching. Nevertheless, to his daughter Emily, his sermon appeared long ; though, when it was over, she felt in such a tremor at the thought of meeting her admirer in the aisle, that she almost wished it had not come to a close. Perhaps it was this tremor that made her drop her prayer-book just as she arrived at the church porch : fortunately, the amiable Unknown was already stationed there, and had the happiness of picking it up ; but, the moment after, he dropped it again, probably owing to the circumstance of having slackened his hold, to insert a slip of paper between its leaves ; recovering it, however, very dexterously, he presented the one within the other to Miss Emily Eleonora, with a most significant look and graceful bow, saying, "Excuse my awkwardness," Miss Emily curtailed, trembled, and could not utter a word, even of thanks, but Mrs. Pluffy took the office on herself.

"Very much obliged to you, sir ; sorry you have had so much trouble."

The young man bowed again, smiled, and "*eclipsed himself*," as the French phrase it, among the crowd.

"Very genteel-looking young man," said Mrs. Pluffy. "I wonder who he is ! Your brother would have known, I dare say. Give the book to Dawkins, my dear."

"I have put it in my reticule, mamma," said Miss Emily, applying her smelling-bottle at the same time ; "it is not worth while taking it out again for such a little way."

Clement Courtney at that moment joined them, and received, as Miss Pluffy had hoped, an invitation from the doctor to partake of the venison.

"Venison is one of the ultra-good things that I never eat," said Courtney, "and I was, moreover, half engaged to dine with Orville to-day. I expected to have met him here, at church ; but as he has broken his promise, I may break mine." So saying, he offered his arm to Mrs. Pluffy, for the doctor was somewhat encumbered with his canonicals, and was, moreover, lost in amazement that Courtney should not like venison.

"I once knew a gentleman," said he, "a very sensible man, too, that used to faint away at the sight of a loin of

veal—though, with the kidney nicely papered, it is a very excellent joint, much better than the fillet—but I never before met with any one that did not like venison.”

“It is an idiosyncrasy, of which I ought, no doubt, to be ashamed,” said Courtney, laughing; “but I never want any inducement to dine at the Rectory beyond the society of its inhabitants.”

He said this with so much cheerfulness and gallantry, that Miss Plufty began to feel all her tender *calculations*, for *sentiments* they could not be called, respecting him revive, and was willing to persuade herself that the scene her sister had witnessed at the cottage might have been something merely of a benevolent nature, in which the generosity of his temper had involved him.

Miss Emily Eleonora scarcely spoke one word all the way home, so occupied was her imagination in divining the contents of the mysterious scrap she held, with an involuntary pressure, tight in her reticule.

“Emmy, my dear, you are pale to-day,” said the anxious mother, chagrined at her apparent absence in the presence of Courtney; “you are not quite well?”

“I have got a little headache,” she replied, again having recourse to her smelling-bottle; “but the air will do me good.”

“Perhaps you caught cold yesterday,” said Clement; “you must have had an unpleasant walk, the air was so damp.”

“Yes, I told her,” said her mamma, “that she had better stay at home; but I fancy she had some little secret errand—she would not tell me what it was” (and here the good lady smiled significantly at Courtney, by way of insinuating that it was some deed of charity that had called her forth).

Poor Miss Emily’s paleness was, for a moment, superseded by a blush, which was deepened to the nearest approach to red her complexion admitted of, by a curious sort of arch expression on Clement Courtney’s countenance, as he looked at her and said, “Ah, we all have our little secrets—I’m sure I have mine; don’t you think I have, Miss Emily?”

“I do not know, indeed,” said she, faintly smiling; “at any rate, I have no business with them, and you may depend upon it I shall not try to find them out.”

“Well then, I will be equally honourable,” said Clement,

laughingly ; "it is a treaty betwixt us then, henceforward, we will keep each other's secrets. I shall astonish you one day with some of mine."

Hereupon Miss Pluffy put on a look of gentle reproach, tintured with a suitable mixture of sadness ; but, as they just then arrived at the gate of the Rectory, she could not exactly ascertain the degree of effect it produced. Turning her head, however, with a pensive air, as if to look for her papa, she saw that pillar of orthodoxy leisurely advancing, accompanied by Mr. Muggins, the wealthy brewer, whom, happening to fall in with, on his homeward route, he had, mindful of a prudent hint from his wife, invited to come and take "pot luck" with him ; an invitation which, from the doctor, might always be safely accepted without any danger of stumbling on a meagre day.

"How unlucky !" exclaimed Miss Pluffy to her sister, as they were taking off their bonnets, "that papa should have invited that Mr. Muggins to-day, of all days."

"*That* Mr. Muggins ! why, you know, Augusta, it was only yesterday that you were complaining papa never did invite him now."

"No, I did not complain, I only remarked it."

"Yes, but you remarked it in such a way, as if you wished him to be asked ; I'm sure I thought you did."

"As for that, I don't care one pin about him, one way or the other," said Miss Pluffy, prudently avoiding any observation absolutely disparaging to the compounder of malt and hops. "I only think we could do very well without him to-day, when Mr. Courtney dines with us."

"It is singular enough that they should both come at once, when it is so long since either of them dined with us," said Miss Emily ; "but, at any rate, it would be very ungrateful in you to be angry with Mr. Muggins for coming, he is always so mighty civil to you ; he takes good care to keep you all to himself."

"I suppose you mean to say," Miss Pluffy angrily replied, "that I am to have the exclusive pleasure of entertaining him, whilst you are laughing and talking with Mr. Courtney. I am much obliged to you."

"Indeed," said Miss Emily, "I am not thinking of Mr. Courtney, and I am not in such a humour for laughing

and talking as you may fancy ; indeed I don't know that I shall sit down to dinner at all, I have got such a dreadful headache. But pray make haste and go into the drawing-room, for I dare say mamma is busy with something or other."

Miss Pluffy thought it would be as well, at any rate, to have the field to herself for a quarter of an hour, and accordingly, having given a parting glance at her countenance in the glass, and endeavouring to clear away the cloud that hung upon it, she left her sister to herself, much to the satisfaction of that young lady, whose impatience to read the mysterious billet was such, that she could scarcely wait till the door was closed ere she drew it from its concealment.

It was written in pencil, on a small leaf of gilt-edged paper, apparently abstracted from a prayer-book.

"Forgive me," it began, "for abandoning myself to a passion as profound as it is impetuous. Already am I gone an age in love.

" 'It came upon me like a mighty storm,
And in an instant drove me far from shore.'

"I ought not to have trusted myself again in your presence. But yesterday was such a miserable day of disappointment to me ! Yet what right had I to hope ? At this moment how different are my feelings ! What a serenity possesses me ! I gaze upon that graceful figure, formed by nature for the attitude of devotion. It is so difficult to *kneel* well—Miss O'Neil herself could not do it, she was too tall ; you are precisely the height that includes all of dignity that can be granted to woman, without deteriorating from her bewitching softness. I cannot withdraw my eyes—

" 'Thy image steals between my God and me.'

Did I deceive myself ? or did I, just now, intercept a furtive glance, perhaps meant for some happier individual ? but no !

" 'I must not think—that way distraction lies.'

I will go and retrace the scene of my short felicity. Ah, if by some happy coincidence I should be blest, even at a distance, with the sight of her who irradiated the humble walls whither I so oft retire,

" 'To chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy.'

What if I should seek this lovely vision even under her own

garden walls ! I ask but one look, one single look, or if more,—

“ ‘Loose, now and then, a scatter’d smile,
And that I’ll live upon.’ ”

Alas ! the sermon is finished ! Never, surely, was sermon so short before. You rise, you move down the aisle ; now, favouring fortune, lend me thy wings.”

Miss Emily was so puzzled to decipher this epistle, almost illegible from the haste with which it had been written by the enamoured swain, under concealment of the crown of his hat, that its incoherencies escaped her notice. She only comprehended that it was, to all intents and purposes, a *love-letter* ; and what added to its value as such was, considering she was one of Doctor Pluffy’s daughters, that, somewhat strange to say, it was the first she had ever received. She felt her existence doubled, whilst she deciphered it word by word ; her bosom swelled, the tears gushed into her eyes, she pressed the paper to her lips as passionately as lover could desire, and then consigned it to safe custody, as near her heart as she could gain access to it. Poor girl ! it might be all very ridiculous, but it was no great fault : the desire to be beloved is so natural to the “feminine soul ;” and youth is so ingenious in deceiving itself—it always fancies objects exactly what they ought to be, always fancies events will turn out exactly as may be wished. After a delicious reverie of two minutes, she drew the precious memento forth again ; but ere she had time to read it once more, the dinner-bell rang. “To be, or not to be ?” “The garden, or not the garden ?” that was the question ; “whether ’twere nobler in the mind to suffer the stings and arrows” of a tormenting curiosity, or to take a bold step at once, and ascertain the ground on which her future acquaintance with her admirer was to stand ? Her resolution was soon formed.

“Mamma,” said she, looking into the drawing-room, “I have got such a bad headache, I really think I had better not go in to dinner. If you will send me a little soup, I will take a turn in the garden after it, and if the air does me good, I will come in with the dessert.”

Mamma thought it best she should do so, and advised her to keep herself quiet on the sofa. Miss Pluffy, having a double inducement to play the amiable with Clement Courtney on one side, and Mr. Muggins on the other, offered, though somewhat faintly, to keep her company; but this proposition was immediately rejected by Miss Emily Eleonora, who assured her that she should feel very uncomfortable at keeping her from table.

"The fact is," said the doctor, "Emily will be better away from temptation, if she has the headache. I believe abstinence is the best cure for most disorders, though, thank God, I am very seldom obliged to try it; but a little fruit may not do her any harm, so she had better wait till we have dined; for, next to not being able oneself to eat, I do not know anything more disagreeable than to see others not eat."

"It is what I call very unfriendly," said Courtney, "as Bulwer says, in 'Paul Clifford.'"

Just then in came the son and heir, fully prepared not to damp his father's appetite by exhibiting any want of it himself.

"Good morning, sir," to his father—"Good morning, ladies. Ah, Courtney, how are you? and you here too, my XXXcellent friend, Mr. Muggins—quite an unlooked-for treat. I had expected only our own family party."

"You were pretty sure of an agreeable one in that case, sir," said Mr. Muggins, his formality relaxing under the influence of his gallantry to Miss Pluffy, and the compliment to the quality of his ale implied by the style of her brother's address.

"Just in pudding-time, I fancy," said the Cantab. "I nosed the venison as I got off my horse—but, by-the-by, I thought Orville might be here; he half promised me, and I saw his grey some way before me; but then I suddenly lost sight of him again."

"We would have given him a quarter of an hour's grace," said the doctor, "on the chance, if it had not been for the venison. Mr. Muggins, will you take Mrs. Pluffy?"

The brewer bowed, and offered his arm; Clement did the same to Miss Pluffy; the doctor and his son brought up the rear, and Emily Eleonora was left to rehearse, before the

glass, the attitudes in which she might be seen to most advantage, *accidentally* looking over the garden-wall "*à la Juliette*." The very thought of the interview put her into such a flutter, that she was obliged to strengthen herself with a second plateful of soup, after it had been removed from table, and a second glass of sherry, after a good substantial slice of bread and butter, with which she quickly eked out her repast. Then telling Simpson to say she did not wish for anything more, she rose from the sofa the moment she was left alone, and wrapping her shawl round her, in as graceful folds as her hurry would permit her to form, she softly stole into the garden, "to try the benefit of the air," and prudently taking the opposite direction to that which led in front of the dining-room windows, she arrived at an angle, out of sight of the house, where a bench afforded her an excuse to herself for stopping to cast a pensive look towards the western sky. Scarcely had she time to assume the attitude of Juliet, in the balcony, when she heard the appropriate apostrophe,

"Would I were a glove upon that hand!"

There the quotation ceased, for the quoter suddenly sprung upon a heap of stones in the road below; with a second bound, that would have done honour to harlequin himself, was at the lady's side, and the next moment he knelt at her feet, in the most regular and approved histrionic style.

Never had Miss Emily Eleonora seen anything on the stage half so affecting; but, alas! her fears predominated even over her admiration; she could have gazed at him for hours, so charmingly in her eyes did this attitude become him, but she was aware it might be criticised very differently by colder spectators, and she hastily entreated him to rise, extending her hands, in her agitation, to assist him, with such unmistakeable tremor, that the young man could not help pressing them within his own, whilst he besought her to take courage, and not to rob him of the delight of an interview for which he had scarcely dared to hope.

"Fortune, thou now hast made amends for all
Thy past unkindness—I absolve my stars,"

he exclaimed; and then Miss Emily accounted for the bliss she had bestowed upon him, by a statement of her headache,

which she attributed to the agitation of his note ; and then he deplored his precipitation, and entreated her forgiveness, so humbly, that she could not help assuring him he had given her no offence ; and then he was enraptured again with her sweetness, and so they went on, delighting and delighted. But it has been observed, from time immemorial, even by those who have been lovers themselves, nay, perhaps ever since lovers first began to play the conspicuous part they always have done upon the stage of life, that the conversation of those same amiable individuals is never interesting to any mortal breathing but their own identical selves. It may be inability to ascend to the sublimities they utter, under the inspiration of their passion ; it may be envy of their superior happiness ; it may be this ; it may be that ; but whatever it may be, dear reader, we firmly believe in the truth of the remark, because we feel our own utter insufficiency to transfer to these pages, however carefully drawn from nature, the hundredth part of the effect mutually produced upon Miss Emily Eleanora Plufty, and her unknown admirer, by the tender and affecting things they said to each other.

“ Amanda she, Amandus he.”

We therefore crave leave to quit the garden scene, softened as it was by the gentle drizzling rain known by the name of a “ Scotch mist,” and to return to the rector’s dining-room, where a good fire and a warm crimson paper seemed at once to give additional lustre to, and borrow fresh brightness from, the liquid ruby that shone in the glasses, and the still deeper dye of the rector’s nose, as it alternately approached itself to the “ precious goblet, cup divine,” or pointed towards the lamp-illuminated ceiling, as it imbibed a titillation of “ Prince’s mixture.”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RECTOR IN HIS MAGISTERIAL CAPACITY.

IT chanced that at the moment a civil feeling of decorum prompted us to withdraw from the twilight *tête-à-tête* of the lovers, to bask in the warm, and, in a culinary point of view,

the still fragrant atmosphere of the party that were reflecting upon their own features in the polished mahogany surface of that glory of modern inventions, a set of "sympathetic dinner-tables;" the conversation had, oddly enough, turned upon Temperance Societies.

"I confess," said the doctor, pushing the bottle as he spoke, "I am no great friend to these new-fangled associations; the fact is, I distrust the principle of the thing. Of course, as a minister and a gentleman, I know and feel all the impropriety, I may say the deformity, the debasing nature of the sin of drunkenness; and I believe I need not say, here, in my own house, and among friends that know me so well, how often I have treated of sobriety, and temperance, and industry, and all that sort of thing, from the pulpit; as, in fact, I did, this very day, with a special allusion to the poor of my own parish; nor need I say, how rigorously, as a magistrate, I have enforced the penalties of the law upon all offenders and defaulters, whatsoever,—Mr. Courtney, the bottle stands with you, sir,—in that respect. It was but last week I had that incorrigible rascal, Jem Robinson, put in the stocks, for being intoxicated; and would you believe it, sir? the fellow was so far gone in that beastly gin, that he actually did not know whether it was his head or his heels he was to put between the bars."

"Capital!" exclaimed Mr. Augustus Myddleton Plumtree Plufty, filling himself a bumper, perhaps inadvertently, in his intense appreciation of the joke; "I would have given a dozen of claret for Shirley to have seen him; he would have hit him off to the life."

"Augustus," said the doctor with the reproving glance of a dignitary, "remember in whose presence you are, and do not talk, here, about players, particularly on the Sabbath. I merely mentioned the fact, to show that I am not weakly lenient towards offenders against the rules, properly understood, of temperance; but as to the society itself, I think the object of it is only to bring all ranks down to the same level, and that it is little better than a wolf in sheep's clothing; in short, sir," turning to Courtney with a determined air of carrying conviction to his auditors, and slapping the table as if it had been

"Pulpit drum ecclesiastic,
Beat with fist, instead of a stick,"

"I look upon it as nothing else than Radicalism and Catholicism in disguise."

"Dear me ! how shocking it is, to be sure !" said Mrs. Pluffy ; "one never knows when one's safe now-a-days. Mr. Muggins, sir, pray take an orange ; they are sweeter than they look, they can't do you any harm."

"No, indeed," said Miss Pluffy, who on the present occasion assumed the solid and reflective ; "every day in these times presents some strange feature for contemplation," and as she spoke, she cast a furtive glance towards Mr. Muggins, whose physiognomy, sooth to say, presented divers and very many strange features for contemplation.

Still the doctor kept his eye fixed upon Clement Courtney, as if demanding an approving commentary upon what he had put forth, *ex cathedra* ; and, thus called upon, Clement replied,—

"I must confess it would be something very like a radical reform, if the people could once be brought to admit the notion into their heads that they would be more likely to raise themselves a step in the social ladder by laying some of their earnings by, than by spending all they get in gin and beer."

"Why, as to that, sir," said Mr. Muggins, with somewhat of animation, yet colouring up to the ears, at the unusual sound of his own voice actually making a speech, "you'll excuse me for interrupting you, as to what you were a saying ; but I must say, for my own part, that as to them nasty dram-shops, it appears to me, according to my way of thinking, at least, that they are the pests and bane of all moral and religious society ; and if I were the Lord Chancellor, or the Bishop of London, I would put them all down in a twinkling. But as to good and wholesome beer—I don't speak of such as they brew at the Cannon brewery, and other places I could name, which is poisoned with *coccus indicus*, and, moreover, drugged with grains of paradise and other substances, deleterious to life and intellect, and, by that, amenable to act of parliament ; but good, wholesome beer, and treble X ale, I do hold, and wish to maintain, quite impartially, and I may say without a thought of my own interests, or any view of commending myself, though I believe my respected friend, the doctor, and Mrs. Pluffy too,

I am free to believe, will say, as indeed they have often told me, that they never drink clearer, or purer, or better malt and hops, than what they are kind enough to order from Muggins and Co. Such beer, I make bold to say, is the natural liquid aliment of man, and is, in fact, the national beverage, the poor man's only real comfort, and his lawful right, and what he ought not to be deprived of by no means, and that's why I do not uphold the Temperance Societies now; though I did as long as they confined themselves to spirituous liquors and dram-shops, because I do hold them things to be unnatural and unlawful; but when they began to attack decent, regular licensed public-houses, in a large way, and well-brewed malt liquor, why then, I must honestly confess, I began to distrust their motives, and thought it very likely they had some deep-laid scheme at the bottom, against the church and state, and against the people too; that is, against the respectable, middle rank of people, which, according to my mind, is precisely them as don't aspire to wine, and despise spirits."

Thus ended the longest harangue Mr. Muggins had ever made in his life, and uproariously was it cheered by the doctor's heir, who had that amiable leaning towards a glass of good ale by which the Cantabs have been distinguished, from time immemorial; but the doctor himself, as well as his help-mate, were dumb-founded by the appeal thus made to them, in the presence of the elegant Clement Courtney, as to their approval of a liquor which, before certain of their guests, they took care never to taste; and Miss Pluffy was too attentively examining the pattern of her *doyley* to lift up her eyes, until the subject should be changed for one less embarrassing to her speculations. And changed it was most abruptly by the sudden entrance of Dawkins, who, with distended jaws, and a countenance in which fear evidently struggled with the pleasurable excitement of an incident to talk about, informed his master, in a hoarse whisper, that a man had just been seen to get over the garden wall, and that the groom and the cook had gone to look for him, and that they had heard a queer sort of whispering and seen something in white, like, behind the bushes, close to the summer-house; so they turned back, because misses' little dog, as had followed them, began to bark, and they were afraid the robbers might knock

'em down, and then get into the house and kill everybody, and run away with the plate.

"Gracious me!" exclaimed Mrs. Plufly, "take care of the doctor, above all things. What will become of us all? Very likely it's some of the Thetford gang—most likely we shall all be murdered in our beds, as the old man was at the turn-pike last year."

"Nonsense," said the doctor, who was constitutionally brave after dinner, "some rascal come to see what he can get; but I'll make an example of him if we catch him;" and in his virtuous indignation he raised himself some inches from his arm-chair; but recollecting that motion was unfavourable to digestion, he sunk down into it again, and nodding to his son, who was already making towards the door in pursuit of the trespassers,

"That's right," said he, "Augustus, take the groom and Dawkins, and bring the fellow here."

"I will, sir, depend upon it; that is, if he will let me, as the man said when he caught the Tartar. It will be capital fun to hold a court of justice round the table. We'll swear in the jury when we come back."

"I will go with you," said Courtney, "though most likely the fellow has beaten a retreat by this time."

"Take care of yourself," dear Mr. Courtney," said Miss Plufly, laying her hand upon his arm, in her agitation. He laughed at the caution, and ran out of the room with Augustus.

Mr. Muggins, seeing the interest excited in the young lady's bosom by Courtney's display of courage, began to button up his coat, as if making up his mind to follow him; but again Miss Plufly,

"At his side,
Her soul-subduing voice applied."

"O! Mr. Muggins, do not run any risk; pray stay here, and take care of us;" at which entreaty he quickly changed his intention, and, drawing his chair a little nearer to her, ventured to say,—

"I am sure I am most appy to stay, if I can be of hany use. It is very providential I came to-day; I hope, though, our people will see to the brewery and the counting-house, if there's such bad characters about."

In the time that he was uttering these words, Augustus and Courtney had made half the circuit of the garden, in different directions.

"I will bet you a dozen of claret I unkennel him," said Augustus, leaping over the darling broccoli beds.

Courtney proceeded, less noisily, towards the summer-house, and there he saw the offender—not in a very alarming attitude, for he was kneeling on one knee, to a figure certainly in white, but neither ghost nor robber, for lo! it was Miss Emily Eleonora Pluffy herself! but who the gentleman was, did not appear; for, starting up, in an instant, he said to Courtney, in a low voice, though not low enough to escape the quick ear of the young lady,

"Do not appear to know me." He then said aloud, "Sir, I have to apologize for having alarmed this young lady, by imprudently stepping across the wall in search of my hat, which blew off in a sudden gust of wind. I was this instant praying her to pardon me."

Courtney could scarcely help laughing at the ease with which this figure of speech was uttered; but he answered, with as much gravity as if he had believed it,

"Then probably, sir, now that you have found your hat, and made your apology, you may wish to regain the road. Shall I have the pleasure of showing you the way out?"

"Thank you, the same, but we have all of us

"Our exits and our entrances."

I shall go out as I came in. Farewell."

This farewell was uttered in a low sentimental tone to Miss Emily. Then to Courtney he said, "You know where to find me," and in an instant he skipped again over the wall.

When Miss Emily saw the crown of his hat out of sight, if we may be pardoned the Irishism of the expression, she had time to think of herself, and to become exceedingly agitated.

"I hope you will not quarrel with him," said she. "How very odd you must think me—how angry mamma will be if she knows I was in the garden so late. She will be sure I shall catch cold; but I had such a headache."

"We will go quietly into the house," said Courtney,

good-naturedly drawing her arm through his. "Mrs. Plufly and your sister had not left the dining-room when I came out, and we need not say anything about the matter."

"Well," said Augustus, coming up to them, out of breath, "you would have done the right thing for the claret. I cannot find the rascal."

"Nor I," said Courtney. Poor Emily quite pressed his arm to her side in her gratitude for this attempt to screen her folly.

"But how is this?" continued Augustus. "Why, Emily, are you the something in white?—your cheeks are white enough, at any rate—so we have ascertained that part of the matter; but pray have you seen the robber that came for what he could get, or to make love to the maids, I don't know which?"

"I have seen no robber," said Emily, falteringly. "I came out to try if the air would do me good; but pray don't say anything about me, for I had no idea it was so late."

By the time they reached the house, the doctor, supporting Mrs. Plufly, and Miss Plufly, supported by Mr. Muggins, were all drawn up in battle array, on the lawn, near enough to the hall-door to effect a retreat, should any very formidable band of robbers, housebreakers, or assassins, simultaneously present themselves; and when they saw only Emily, quietly walking between her brother and Clement Courtney, exclamations of surprise, not unmixed with disappointment, broke at once from all the expectant party.

"Why, Emily, my child," said the doctor, who, having enveloped his head in a dinner napkin, looked like a full moon,

"Kerchief'd in a comely cloud,"

"how is it you are out at this time of night? Was it you that Dawkins mistook for a robber?"

"Or for a ghost?" said Miss Plufly.

"Yes, indeed, you may so," said Mrs. Plufly; "she looks pale enough, I am sure. I dare say she has been frightened with something or other. Come into the dining-room, my dear, and take a glass of wine, it will do you good."

"It will do us all good," said the doctor, gladly facing about; "I know it will do me good, at any rate, after this exposure to the night air."

So, accordingly, the whole party reassembled round "the mahogany," where the gentlemen might probably have resumed the discussion of the temperance question, but it seemed that the affair of the robber was not to be so easily got quit off; for scarcely had the doctor taken the decanter in his hand, when he was stopped, in passing it round, by a second irruption from the kitchen, strengthened, this time, by a reinforcement from the village, for they had to manage a prisoner, who, at all times of an unmanageable nature, was doubly so now, from being very considerably under the influence of the liquor which Mr. Muggins had been so eloquent in praise of, as peculiarly adapted to minister to the respectability of the community at large.

This obstreperous person was no other than Blacksmith Jem, now brought into the worshipful and reverend presence of the rector, not merely for the misdemeanor of drunkenness, for that was too common an error at Gormanton, particularly on a Sunday evening, notwithstanding the doctor's morning eloquence on the subject, to excite much notice; but he was charged with the more serious suspicion of having taken "act and part" in the matter of the robber—for such it was settled the scaler of the wall must be, it being proved by "divers and very many" witnesses, to wit, the undergardener, one boy that tended pigs in the lane, and another that was bringing cows from the pasture, that he had been holding a horse, more than an hour, just beneath the wall that the robber, or murderer, whichever he might be, had been seen to get over, and was, moreover, seen again to descend, when he, the said Jem, brought the said horse to him, the said robber, or murderer, whichever he might be, at the corner of the lane, which horse, he, the aforesaid suspicious character of murderer, or robber, whichever he might be, did incontinently mount, and was seen, after he was seated in the saddle, to put into the hands of the said Jem certain pieces of metal, shrewdly suspected, by their jingle, to be two shillings of lawful money of the coinage of the realm, and, immediately after, to clap spurs to the said horse, a grey according to one, a bay according to another, and to

set off at a hard trot ; whilst he, the said Jem, with the aforesaid pieces of metal in his hand, did then and there proceed, not *straight*, but incontinently, to the house for "entertainment of man and beast," known by the name of the "Gormanton Arms," and famous for Muggins' Entire and XXX ale, into which he was evidently intending to effect an entry, had he not found himself suddenly arrested in his course, just as his foot was crossing the threshold, by the grasp of the under-gardener, the pig-tender, the cow-herd, and a person unknown, who, being a little in liquor himself, felt charitably inclined to prevent any person from being the same.

The delinquent was hurried into the presence of justice, in such quick time, that those who had aided to bring him there did not know exactly what charge to make against him, and to himself, already pretty considerably "bemused with beer," it seemed that he was brought before the rector, in his magisterial capacity, convicted of being suspected of having stolen, or of having intended to steal, the horse which he had been holding for "the gem'man." Paying little attention, therefore, to the statement of the deposition against him, of having aided the departure of the trespasser, and having been seen to receive money for so doing, he wisely waited till his accusers had finished their opening of the case, beguiling the time, meanwhile, with a wondering stare all round the room, at the crimson damask curtains, the portraits of the doctor and his lady, splendidly framed, and amiably smiling at each other, the polished tables, the brilliant cut-glasses and decanters thereon, and the tempting vinous fluids therein, till he screwed his lips into the compass of a silver penny, and finally fixed his eyes, with a sort of friendly goggle, on Miss Emily Eleonora, who, by no means ambitious, at that moment, of acknowledging him as an acquaintance, turned as red as she had before been pale, and drank off her glass of sherry, in good earnest, to strengthen her nerves for the coming explanation.

After the evidence against him had been heard, Jem was asked what he had got to say for himself, upon which, with a rhetorical flourish of his arm, as if he were waving his hammer in the air, previous to bringing it down upon the anvil, and advancing a step nearer to the judge and jury, he said,—

"Why, as to what I've got to say, your worship's reverence, I says that whatever these 'ere chaps has said against me, I don't believe a word of it. As to stealing that there horse I was a holding for his lordship, I hadn't a notion of it, case why? it ben't in my natur to steal a horse; it's nat'ral to some folks, your honour, to steal a horse, but it ar'nt nat'ral to me, your honour. I've heerd my grandfather tell of a man that couldn't look over a hedge, your reverence's honour, but what his neighbours said, if a horse chanced to be missing next day, that he had stolen it. I don't remember what his name was—he went beyond seas, I've heerd my grandfather say, and died in foreign parts, but I don't know as how that he went on horseback."

"Give us none of your grandfather's history, fellow," said the doctor, sternly, "but tell me at once what business you had under my garden-wall at this time of night, and what business you had to help the vagabond, that had the presumption to jump over it, to get away?"

"Lord help your honour's reverence's heart," replied the blacksmith, "he's no vagabond that there young gem'man as got over your worship's wall. Miss Emmy there knows better than that; why, miss, it was the same young gem'man as you met at our house t'other day. My dame telled me, when I comed home to dinner, that both of you seemed made for one another, as a body may say."

Poor Miss Emily turned red and white, as she faintly said, "I don't know what he means."

"No, my dear, I am sure you do not," said her prudent mamma, "and I don't think he does himself. Pray, doctor, send him away—you see he is not in a fit state to be questioned before ladies."

"You have been drinking, sirrah," said the doctor; "I shall fine you for drunkenness; and, as it is on the Lord's day, I shall make no mitigation in the penalty."

"I'm not drunk, your reverence's worship, no more than your worship's reverence is. I've been a-drinking a little, to be sure, because the horse wanted to drink, as is nat'ral to dumb beasts your worship knows; so I took him to the public-house to get a mouthful of water for him, and then I got a mouthful of Squire Muggins's beer for myself, as was nat'ral, too; but I'm not drunk, for all that. He'll tell you,

it takes a deal of his beer to make any honest man drunk ; and as to not knowing what I'm a talking about—why, Mr. Courtney, there, knows this young chap as got over wall as well as I do ;—it's same, sir, axing your pardon for making bold to speak to you, that was sitting at my dame's fire-side yesterday forenoon when your honour came in with that young lady, in black, like, to wait whilst I put a lynch-pin in your honour's wheel."

It was now Courtney's turn to colour, which he certainly did ; but he could not help laughing at the absurdity of the situation in which he and his fair fellow-sufferer were thus placed by the garrulous blacksmith. Augustus enjoyed the joke mightily, and throwing himself back into his chair, indulged in such a peal of laughter that Jem, catching the social infection, also burst into a loud, long, uproarious horse-laugh, "as was nat'ral, seeing a fellow-Christian laugh so heartily," he observed, on being rebuked by the doctor for daring to indulge any risible propensities in his presence.

The worthy divine, however, very wisely thought it best to inquire into the matter no further, at that time ; he, therefore, dismissed the whole party, accusers and delinquent altogether, with a pious exhortation to them to keep themselves sober, and hold a watch over their tongues, which Jem received with a scraping down of his hair by way of a bow ; and after a repetition of his amiable goggling smile at Miss Emily Eleonora, and a significant contraction of the muscles of his left eyelid to Courtney, he speedily found his way back to the Gormanton Arms, where he stayed, proving to everybody there that "it warn't in his natur' to steal a horse," till they all made up their minds that, by his saying so much about it, he must be the very man that had stolen farmer Dobbins's blind mare off the common the week before.

Meantime great was the embarrassment of the parties in the dining-room how to appear unembarrassed after the awkward turn the defence of the accused had taken. Miss Emily complained of a return of her headache, and Courtney fell into a reverie, which, to judge from his countenance, seemed by no means of an agreeable nature. He was roused from it by Augustus.

"I say, Courtney, you know Lord Orville's grey ; I would

bet a hundred pounds that it was that very grey this fellow was leading about in the lane, for I heard his footsteps when I was on the side of the garden opposite to that you went to, and I looked over the wall, and could swear to him."

"But it could not be Lord Orville that was in the garden," said Mrs. Pluffy; "he would not have done such a thing."

"He does rather unaccountable things sometimes," said Courtney, very gravely; "but as to scaling the wall of a private garden, I do not suppose he would do that merely for amusement."

"He is a strange fellow," said Augustus; "he's fond of changing names with people, and disguising himself and mystifying the bystanders; but he's a droll fellow when he's in tip-top spirits. He is good-natured, too, in the main; but he is a dragon if he's put out of his way."

"He has many excellent qualities," said Courtney, "and he has not a friend in the world more interested in him, or in what is thought about him, than myself. His fault is being too precipitate and headstrong in everything he does; but now it is high time he should consider his position in society, and leave off the follies that might be passed over when he was a mere boy." Augustus had remarked that, of late, Courtney had always appeared embarrassed or angry when Lord Orville became accidentally the subject of conversation, and he had too much tact to continue a theme he perceived to be disagreeable, yet what could make it so? Was it jealousy? was it rivalry?—but he had never heard of Courtney being enslaved by the tender passion, and for rivalry in anything else, his pursuits were so different from his lordship's, that it did not appear likely any should occur between them. Mrs. Pluffy interrupted his conjectures by leading the way to the drawing-room, and the gentlemen soon followed. Courtney handed Miss Emily Eleonora her coffee, with a smile of understanding, which she took care to return with a look of pensive gratitude, but no further effort towards conversation was made between them. The doctor dozed, Mrs. Pluffy sate in a silent fidget about the garden adventure, Mr. Muggins was solemnly attentive to Miss Pluffy, who bent her ear towards him and her eyes towards Courtney, and Augustus set the whole party down as wonderfully stupid.

"I can't think," said he to himself, "what has come over everybody. Orville one can never get at, Courtney always seems in the moon, and even Shirley himself, when I met him yesterday, looked as glum as if he were going to turn Methodist. I suppose it will end by their all joining the Temperancers. I wish I was back at my chambers, with my own jolly set of good fellows, and our cigars and a bowl of Roman punch to wind up with."

CHAPTER XX.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

CERTAINLY man is an ungrateful animal. He is always thinking of what he wants, and never of what he has—I own it—I feel it, alas! I fret and fume, because I have been well on to twenty years a curate. My poor old townsman and schoolfellow, Nehemiah Gates, was double that time, in the same capacity, on a stipend lower than mine. He, at intervals, humbly solicited some moderate advance of salary, or some small living: it seemed, however, that none could be found small enough for poor Nehemiah, in the whole forty thousand a year's patronage of his bishop. Sometimes he would reckon it up—three archdeaconries, including one canonry in the cathedral; eight livings of nearer two thousand a-year than one; one of nearer five than four; thirteen exceeding five hundred; twenty-five between two and five hundred; and twenty-three others from one hundred a-year and upwards—save one, a perpetual curacy under fifty; but even with that the humble-minded Nehemiah would have been abundantly contented; but year after year passed over his head, and disappointment after disappointment of his wishes, moderate as they were—still he bore all meekly, till he had the misfortune to fall in love: then he grew moody, and would sometimes threaten to throw off his gown, and open a shop in Sedgfield. At last, the object of his affection died, of that sickness of the heart called "Hope deferred," and poor Nehemiah went mad—but his malady was of a harmless character. He called his cranky little writing-table a *counter*, and put his few books,

and his sermons upon it, and fancied they were cheeses and butter firkins. He imagined himself surrounded by customers, from morning till night; and sometimes he said, in a soft low tone, "My dear, will you give change?" but oftener he would mutter, "never mind the pay—never mind the pay—another time will do—when you get your wages—that will do—to-morrow—I do not want money."

Poor Nehemiah! How much happier my lot has been than his! In many, nay, in most things, how happy it still is! I often think, when I see my dear children, blooming and cheerful at my side, how much I have to be thankful for! Many a peer of the realm would give half his rent-roll, and half his pedigree into the bargain, for two such daughters. I, who have seen, in early life, when I was tutor in Lord H——'s family, something of the languor, the satiety, the ill-humour of many fashionable young women, in the apparent enjoyment of every wish almost before they had time to form it, cannot but look with admiration and delight on the cheerfulness of these dear girls, shut out, as they are, from all society, deprived, by the penury of my circumstances, of the innocent amusements natural to their age; unable to indulge their inherent tastes, which would lead them to the most refined accomplishments, they elicit pleasure out of their duties, and give variety to the monotony and homeliness of their diurnal occupations, by the vivacity of their spirits, their affection for each other, and their duteous fondness for their poor old father, which keeps them always busy, contriving something for his comfort. Then, as to myself, I am blessed with uninterrupted health; my appetite is invariably good. 'Tis true, my table is always plain, and often scanty; but I relish the simplest fare, and am never troubled with indigestion, or stomach complaints, or any of those nervous horrors that make the misery of such as "fare sumptuously every day." Hence my spirits likewise are always good, sometimes even to buoyancy, except when I sinfully disquiet myself by taking "thought for the morrow," and caring "for many things."

Everything is an enjoyment to me. I am neither naturalist, nor botanist, nor entomologist; yet, when I go forth to visit my parishioners round about, on a pleasant morning in spring, not a bird sings, or a bud peeps forth, or a gilded insect

disports in the sunbeams, without awakening some chord of joy, and thankfulness, and holy adoration in my heart ; and then, in the winter evenings, how happy I feel by my fire-side, with my old folios about me ; one open before me, another at my elbow, others within reach, so that I can lay my hands upon them in a moment. 'Tis true I have read them so often that I have them nearly by heart ; but then the frequent re-perusal of the excellent things they contain gives one a sort of intimacy with their worthy authors, and an affectionate respect that makes me listen, as I may say, to their repetitions with pleasure. I should miss Hooker, and Tillotson, and Barrow, as much, if deprived of their works, as I should their countenances, if I had had the happiness of twenty-five years' personal acquaintance with them.

What fine things Barrow says on poverty ! I remember reading, for the first time, his discourses on it, when I was at Lord H——'s, and being so delighted with them, that I fancied I could have been contented, like Diogenes, to live in a tub, and drink out of the hollow of my hand ; but at that time I wanted for nothing myself, nor had I seen a beloved wife languish through a long illness, deprived of all the little luxuries to which she had been accustomed, nor lovely children growing up around me, without any of the advantages of education or society—no. Certainly poverty is a painful and bitter thing to a generous spirit. It seems to fetter even the thoughts. Unfortunately for me, I have a natural pleasure in giving. It may be for this very reason that the means are withheld from me. We are tried in those qualities which require bringing forth, not in those we possess, in some degree, of good. I have more need of patience than of generosity ; yet it is so painful never to be able to give !—never to reward an act of kindness, sometimes even to appear negligent of just claims, or debts—this may, nevertheless, be always before one's eyes—never to be able to indulge in a little hospitality, or to minister to passing wretchedness, or the immediate necessity of some worthy person one may know. Perhaps, however, there is more of self-hood than we suspect in what we fondly imagine to be our virtues. It is certainly more agreeable to our natural desire of aggrandisement to bestow than to accept ; even a

miser would rather confer an obligation upon his neighbour than not, if he were sure it would eventually cost him nothing.

Yet, if we viewed the matter aright, why should we grudge others, blest with the means, the gratification of a liberal act, nay, a positive duty, merely because we ourselves may be the objects of it? I know that it is a pleasure to me to do a kindly or charitable thing, or would be, I ought rather to say; for, as to the luxury of making a little present, the idea has long ceased to visit me, even in my dreams. Am I then the only kindly and charitable person within the circle of my knowledge? God forbid! When Greensides, the other day, sent a hot dinner, smoking all the way from the "Roebuck," to the poor lying-in woman at the bottom of the lane, I felt my heart glow towards the good man, notwithstanding his impenetrable silence, and that I believe he is, at heart, something of a Dissenter; but when he, or rather his wife, for she is the mainspring of action at the bar, sent me word that if I wished for a little ale now and then, or even a bottle of wine, on any particular occasion, she did not wish to stand on a six months' or a twelvemonth's credit, my pride revolted, and I sent Lucy for some ale the very next day, with the money in her hand, to show her I could pay for it.

Oh Thomas! Thomas! verily thou hast much of the old leaven remaining in thee, and yet thou murmurest against the correcting hand of thy Lord and Master, that leads thee, by ways thou knowest not, to that which thou dost most require!

We have had a visit to-day from Mr. Shirley. He called to apologize for not yet having repaid me the trifle I lent him. The poor young man was so confused whilst he stammered out his excuses, that I did not like to listen to them. He looked timidly towards Margaret, as if he was ashamed to meet her eyes—truly, such modesty is rare in a player. I was not sorry to be obliged to quit him for a time; I thought he would perhaps recover his cheerfulness if he was left awhile with the young folks, and I had to go to the poor Widow Tomlinson, whose heart is broken by her only son

having enlisted as a volunteer, to go to Spain. My girls and Mr. Shirley came to meet me on my way home from the poor widow—the walk had freshened them, and put them into spirits. My Margaret's countenance had in it a sweet consideration, unmixed with anything of disappointment or distrust, and the young man seemed restored to his self-possession, by the gentle kindness, nay, deference, of her demeanour towards him, and truly he is an extraordinary character. He has travelled, I find; and in narrating his travels he frequently turned towards me, and elucidated the objects he described with classical quotations, which were marvellously appropriate, and what one would not look for in a player. Verily my heart warms towards the youth. Could I have given my girls, nay, even to five hundred pounds, and he had so fixed his heart, he should have had either of them, had he been anything but a player—and even as he is, were I anything but a clergyman, I am not sure that I should make his calling an objection. St. Paul quotes Menander, a writer of plays; and it does not follow that an actor of them should be less deserving of approbation, if he does his duty in the line of life that he has chosen. In fact, next to the pulpit, the stage ought to be the most successful medium of popular instruction; but this is nothing to the purpose. Lucy is a mere child, and Margaret, though she enters cheerfully enough into raillery about him, as a jest, is yet always grave when it is pursued too far, and evidently disapproves his profession still more than I do. Yet, much as I should feel the separation from her, I cannot help sometimes desiring to see her the cherished partner of some estimable man, insomuch as she would then be sure of a helpmate and protector when I may be in the grave, and she would, moreover, in that case, be able to make, at any rate, a temporary asylum for her sister. But let me recollect what I preach to others, in situations even more disquieting than my own; and let me say from my heart, as I exhort them to do, "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RECITATION.

SCARCELY had Mr. Slender closed the door after him on setting out to visit the Widow Tomlinson, as he has narrated in his journal, when the young man, turning to Margaret with an air of mingled embarrassment and self-reproach, said to her,

"I fear you may condemn—I may forfeit your esteem, by my present conduct—I am conscious—I may seem to act with duplicity, disguise."

He was too much agitated to proceed.

"Pray do not distress yourself with any such idea," said Margaret; "we know too well, ourselves, what disappointments and embarrassments are connected with money, or rather," she added, smiling, "with the want of it, not to enter very easily into any little obstacle that you may have met with, in regard to repaying such a trifle" (the young man's eyes brightened, he recovered his self-possession). "My father was happy to render you what little assistance he could; it was a luxury for us, in our humble way, to be able to confer a service, especially——" She paused, she knew not how to finish her sentence—the young man took her hand,—

"You do not despise me, then, for my poverty?" said he, in a tone at once deprecating and rejoicing.

"Despise you!" said Margaret. "No; I am not so unfeeling or so ignorant;" but as she spoke she withdrew her hand from a pressure that suffused her cheek with crimson.

"Pardon me," said the young man, "I forget myself, but such generous sensibility is so delightful, so cheering; I have felt so insulated, so solitary, of late. Ah! you look at each other; I see what you both think," he continued more cheerfully. "Nay, you need not blush so prettily; you think it is impossible for a player ever to feel himself insulated, or solitary; but playing a character before a crowd is one thing—assuming your own in the stillness of a miserable chamber is another."

"It must be very droll to act," said Lucy, who was as in-

genuous as a child, in giving utterance to whatever thought came uppermost in her mind. "I should be afraid of forgetting myself when I ought to be acting, and acting when I meant to be natural."

"In that, at any rate," said the young man, "you would have plenty to keep you in countenance.

" ' Garrick's the finest actor of the age ;
He's always acting, on or off the stage, ' "

would apply to a very large portion of fashionable society. Indeed, if I were called upon to speak from my own experience, I should say there is less acting, as far as the assumption of feelings not really felt is concerned, among professional actors, than among the multitudes who are striving to fix the eyes of others upon themselves by the enacting of characters exactly opposite to their own."

"Still," said Margaret, timidly, for she feared to wound the feelings of her visitor, "I should be afraid habitual acting might have a tendency to fritter away the perception of truth. It is like lawyers, who, I have heard my father say, are so constantly paid for confounding right and wrong, that at last they often seem scarcely to know any positive difference between them."

"Do you mean to say," said the young man, apparently a little chagrined at her observation, "that you would not have the same confidence in the word of a player as in that of any other person?"

"No," said Margaret; "I did not mean to say that, individually, I should distrust a person for being a player; but, somehow, I think, if I saw any one often in an assumed character, I should never feel very sure that I ever saw him in his natural one."

"I entreat you not to entertain such an opinion," said the young man, colouring very deeply.

"I hope I have not offended you," said Margaret; "my opinion is of so little consequence."

"To me it is invaluable," said the young man, hastily.

"I have seen nothing of society to enable me to form a correct one," continued Margaret, a little confused at the interruption; "the people among whom our lot is cast are

simple enough to say what they mean, and have no inducement to appear anything but what they are."

"So far you are fortunate," said the young man, "for you are not liable to be deceived or disappointed; whereas the higher you were to go in society, the more you would be led to imagine that all the world were adopting the axiom attributed to Talleyrand, 'that language was given to man to disguise his thoughts.'"

"What a strange idea!" exclaimed Lucy.

"What a terrible one!" said Margaret. "What a dreadful degree of deception he himself must have been in the habit of practising before he could give utterance to such an opinion!"

"Nay," said Lucy, "on his own principle, it was not his real opinion; for if it was, he would not have uttered it."

The young man laughed heartily at Lucy's logic, and told her it was a pity she could not go to Cambridge, to study the art of mystifying. "But," added he, gaily, "I do not want to be reminded of Cambridge now that I have the happiness of being at Creykedale, so pray," turning to Margaret, "indulge me with a walk round the garden, to look at that magnificent cedar. You do not know how often I have thought of the day when I first had the delight of seeing it."

"It would be a pity not to please you," said Margaret, smiling at his animation, "when you can be pleased so easily; not but what our cedar is really well worth a visit to it at any time—it is such a regal tree. I should like you to see it in the spring, when its tender green shoots contrast so beautifully with the lingering brown of the old branches that have borne all the bitter blasts of winter; but most likely you will not then be in this part of the world."

Her voice involuntarily fell into a low and somewhat mournful cadence as she spoke, and Lucy's laughing countenance was, for a moment, overcast.

It was so natural for the poor girls to be delighted with an acquaintance so prepossessing in appearance, so pleasing in manners, so unlike any one they had ever seen before, and who, moreover, seemed so happy with them, and showed them so much affectionate respect, or respectful affection,

that though this was only his third visit, they already felt so much at ease with him that they could scarcely believe his introduction to them was of so short a date.

The change in Margaret's tone and Lucy's visage did not escape the quick eye and quicker ear of the young man, and he exclaimed,

"The spring! O would that it were here! the blessed season of hope and love and joy—what dreams of happiness I have indulged in for the spring!"

"Shall we go into the garden?" said Margaret, almost coldly, for his rhapsody had somewhat chilled her. "Yes, he will be seeking new excitement, new applauses, most likely very far from us," thought she; "and, after all, it would be foolish, indeed, in us, to expect that a young man, accustomed to the applause of hundreds of people wherever he goes, should care about the regard of a humble country curate, and his insignificant girls."

Lucy, too, felt a little disappointed, she scarcely knew why, at his expressing no regret at the thought of leaving them; but by the time he had placed himself between them, and drawn an arm of each through his, with a manly frankness, and an air of trusting goodwill, that made demur, on the part of his companions, impossible, the impression, however unpleasant at the moment, had passed away.

How naturally the spirits rise in the open air!—to the young, the healthy, the innocent, the mere feeling of liberty is enjoyment! When the cedar had been gazed upon again and again, and the circuit of the garden been made two or three times, its limits were found too narrow for the joyous trio.

"Is the paddock forbidden ground?" said the youth, "and those fields beyond, might we not venture so far? Shall you be cold?" looking doubtingly, as he spoke, at the somewhat light attire of Margaret and Lucy, whose wardrobe did not allow of a very strict observance of

"The seasons and their change."

"Oh no," exclaimed Lucy; "let us go across the lane, and over the fallow fields, and then we shall be on the moor in a minute, and we can go and meet papa—he will be sure to come over the moor from Widow Tomlinson's."

This motion was eagerly seconded by the young man, and not opposed by Margaret ; so on they went, all mirth and good-humour.

" I am so fond of the moor," said Lucy ; " it is so breezy and so free, one seems to have it all to oneself, and yet it is so sociably dotted over with family-parties of geese, and happy donkies, and nice little cottages, with the babies peeping out at the doors."

" And the shadows cast on it by the clouds vary the colours so," said Margaret. " I like to see them chasing each other as they do now."

" Yes, I like a moor too," said the young man, beating the golden furze as he went along. " I wish I had my dogs here ; we should find something, you may depend upon it, under this brushwood. You should see the moors in Scotland, and the ' bonnie bonnie broom.' When the blackcocks are in season, I've walked many a twenty miles after them."

" I should like the walking," said Lucy, " but not the killing the poor birds."

" It is their natural death. I feel no compunction for being the instrument of their quietus, except when I wing some unfortunate mother away from her nest, without killing her outright."

Whatever discussion this view of the subject might have given rise to on the part of the young ladies was prevented by the sight of Mr. Slender, who, at the distance from which he was beheld, much resembled that sagacious biped a crow, in size and colour.

" Yonder is papa !" exclaimed Lucy, quickening her pace. It was easy to see that the father quickened his also at the sight, from afar, of the objects of his affection. Lucy twined her arm in his the moment they met, so Margaret was obliged to allow her companion to retain hers : it would have been so *rude* to leave him to walk alone ! Gradually they found that the path which had been quite wide enough for three, was very much too narrow for four ; and as Mr. Slender and Lucy took the lead, it followed, very naturally, that Margaret and her companion fell into the rear. At first they kept close enough to the heels of their leaders to join in their conversation, but gradually they found topics of their own, into which they entered with an earnestness

which prevented them from perceiving that they had unconsciously slackened their steps, until they were no longer within hearing of the advanced corps. What these topics were, neither Mr. Shirley nor Miss Slender have ever informed us ; but they were, most probably, much the same as are generally discussed between young gentlemen and young ladies, who have no decided aversion to each other, and find themselves, for the first time, unexpectedly involved in a *tête-à-tête*.

When the little party had all reassembled in the parlour, when bonnets were taken off, hats hung up, the fire stirred, chairs drawn round it, and the information communicated and acceded to, that its blaze was very acceptable, there was a pause ; but it was one of those agreeable *social* silences, which show that the parties who may be involved in it feel sufficiently friendly with each other—sufficiently at ease—not to think themselves called upon to say anything, when they have got nothing to say, merely for the sake of saying something.

Lucy, however, was of far too vivacious a temperament to let this momentary calm of the spirits degenerate into dullness ; and presently, after a side-long look at the young player, she jumped up, threw her arms round her father's neck, and whispered something to him in the coaxing tone of entreaty. He smiled fondly upon her, and revealed the mystery by making her request known.

"Mr. Shirley," said he, "this young lady——"

"Nay, papa, it is *you*," said Lucy, hiding her blushing face on his shoulder.

"Oh, *I*!—well then, *I*, sir, have a great desire to hear a specimen of your oratorical powers, if you would favour us with *repeating something*, as Miss Lucy expresses it——"

"Now, papa——"

"A speech, if you please, sir, from Shakspeare."

Mr. Shirley, thus called upon, turned as red as scarlet. "Upon my honour, sir," said he, "I never could repeat a speech in my life—I mean," correcting himself, "in a private circle."

"That's very odd," said Mr. Slender. "Why, there's Hamlet's soliloquy——"

"To be, or not to be, that is the question ;"

surely you know that ! or Henry the Fifth's address to his soldiers—

“ ‘Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more ;’

—or Duke Humphrey's,

“ ‘Brave peers of England, pillars of the State ;’

—and many more that are to be found in ‘Enfield's Speaker.’ I verily think *I* could repeat several of them myself, even now, though it is a good forty years since I tried, merely from having listened to them so often in my younger days, when I had the honour to be second usher in a school in Cumberland, where the boys used to say them, every Saturday morning, with a good strong northern accent, too, I assure you.”

“ I think I could recollect some verses of Coleridge's,” said Mr. Shirley, “ if the young ladies would like to hear them.”

“ Oh, thank you !” exclaimed Lucy ; “ it is so good-natured.” Margaret smiled encouragement, and Mr. Slender said,—

“ Pray let us have them, sir ; we can have nothing better. I remember Mr. Coleridge when he was quite a boy—always a poet ! I wish I could preach half as well as he talks. I shall be very glad to hear them.”

The young man rose gracefully, and, after an introductory bow to his audience, leaning his arm on the chimney-piece, he began those exquisite lines :

“ All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of love,
And feed his sacred flame.”

He uttered the first stanza, however, with considerably more rapidity than belonged to the subject, and his voice trembled like that of a timid girl ; but soon, regaining his composure, he went on—

“ Oft in my waking dreams do I
Live o'er again that happy hour,
When midway on the mount I lay,
Beside the ruin'd tower.

The moonshine stealing o'er the scene
Had blended with the lights of eve,
And *she* was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Genevieve.”

Here he paused, perhaps to take breath ; he looked towards Margaret. It was very natural he should wish to see how far his commencement was approved of, but her eyes were fixed upon the ground ; so he went on,—

“She lean’d against the armed man,
The statue of the armed knight ;
She stood, and listen’d to my lay,
Amid the lingering light.

Few sorrows hath she of her own,
My hope, my joy, my Genevieve ;
She loves me best, whene’er I sing
The songs that make her grieve.”

Another pause. He seemed trying to recollect the remainder, and then went vigorously on,—

“I play’d a soft and doleful air,
I sang an old and moving story,—
An old rude song, that suited well
That ruin, wild and hoary.

She listen’d with a fitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace ;
For well she knew I could not choose
But gaze upon her face.”

And here he looked again towards Margaret, as if to be prompted ; but she still did not look up, and he proceeded,—

“I told her of the knight that wore
Upon his shield a burning brand,
And that for ten long years he woo’d
The Lady of the land.

I told her how he pined ; and, ah !
The deep, the low, the pleading tone
With which I sang another’s love,
Interpreted my own.”

A pause—

“She listen’d with a fitting blush,
With downcast eyes, and modest grace ;
And she forgave me, that I gazed
Too fondly on her face.

But when I told the cruel scorn
That crazed that bold and lovely knight,
And that he cross’d the mountain woods,
Nor rested day nor night ;

That sometimes from the savage den,
 And sometimes from the darksome shade,
 And sometimes, starting up at once,
 In green and sunny glade,

There came and look'd him in the face
 An angel beautiful and bright ;
 And that he knew it was a fiend,
 This miserable knight.

And that, unknowing what he did,
 He leap'd amid a murderous band,
 And saved from outrage worse than death,
 The Lady of the land.

And how she wept and clasp'd his knees,
 And how she tended him in vain,
 And ever strove to expiate
 The scorn that crazed his brain.

And that she nursed him in a cave,
 And how his madness went away,
 When on the yellow forest leaves
 A dying man he lay.

His dying words !—but when I reach'd
 That tenderest strain of all the ditty,
 My faltering voice and pausing harp
 Disturb'd her soul with pity !”

At every stanza the reciter became more and more animated ; his colour deepened, his eyes sparkled, his countenance glowed, the transcript of his story, his breast laboured, his action unconsciously adapted itself to his incidents, and his tones breathed alike the poet and the lover ; but as he came towards the conclusion, he hurried over the stanzas :—

“ All impulses of soul and sense
 Had thrill'd my guileless Genevieve ;
 The music and the doleful tale,
 The rich and balmy eve ;
 And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
 An undistinguishable throng,
 And gentle wishes, long subdued,—
 Subdued and cherish'd long !”

His voice became almost inaudible ; at length he stopped. “ I have forgotten the rest,” said he ; “ I only know it ends with,—

‘ And so I won my Genevieve,
 My bright and beauteous bride.’ ”

And, as he repeated the words, he knelt a moment at Mar-

garet's feet, as if in playful gallantry, to complete the illusion of the scene ; but lo ! she was in tears ! It seemed a new world that was opened to her. Never before had she heard such delicious accents, never before looked upon a countenance so effusive of soul. The refined and intellectual nature of her delight was scarcely understood, even by herself. She was overpowered by feelings of sympathy, of tenderness, of admiration—she knew not what. She was herself, at that moment, the living, breathing Genevieve of the poet's fancy.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CONFESSION.

"VERY well, indeed, sir," said Mr. Slender ; " it is a beautiful little picture you have given us ; quite a tale of chivalry ; and, at any rate, you see you can melt your audience," smiling as he looked towards Margaret, who now raised her head and smiled too, as she dashed away her tears ; seeing which, Lucy ran and seated herself on her knee, and kissed her, for that was Lucy's invariable mode of congratulating, or condoling ; comforting, or deprecating ; whatever might be the nature of the case that called forth her feelings, whenever they rose to a certain pitch, they were always manifested in that same way.

The young man's looks expressed his gratification.

"I will bring you Coleridge's poems," said he, to Margaret, in a tone soft as that of the minstrel-knight himself, "with Mr. Slender's leave. I have them by me ; it is the first edition, and this story is in it. The volumes are a little defaced by my own pencil-marks ; but if you will accept them, I shall feel much honoured."

"I shall like them all the better for the marks," said Margaret ; "they will guide me to the choice of beauties."

"Yes," said Lucy, "I know you will look out for the passages with them, and they will be the first you will read."

It was a very natural remark of Lucy's, but Margaret crimsoned over at it, because, in fact, she had already thought exactly the same thing.

"Perhaps our tastes will agree," said the young man ; "I shall be very proud should that be the case."

"Spenser, Milton, Shakspeare, Thomson, Akenside, Gray, Collins, Shenstone's Elegies, and an odd volume or two of Fugitive Poetry, have bounded, I believe, my daughters' poetical studies," said Mr. Slender ; "they know very little about living authors, for we are neither in the way of hearing them spoken of, nor procuring their works."

"In some circles," said the young man, "certainly an acquaintance with popular authors is indispensable—they are so often made the themes of conversation ; but then how easily such knowledge is acquired."

Margaret's bosom swelled with a something like sorrow, different from anything she had ever felt before, as she listened to this remark ; for when she looked at the young man's speaking countenance and graceful figure, and his deportment at once respectful and easy, all blended with an air of even aristocratic independence, she could not help thinking that the society which could impart such polish—such intellectual cultivation—must be something very delightful. And then came the reflection, naturally mingled with the regret which had prompted her sigh, that she should never know anything of it, or its advantages. "No, we shall never meet any of the people to whom he has evidently been accustomed," thought she, "and most likely, when he leaves Barnwell, we shall never see him again."

Was there one thought of frivolity or ambition in that pure and hitherto tranquil bosom that caused her, at that moment, for the first time in her life, to think Creykedale too secluded a spot for young women of any refinement to pass their whole lives in ? Certainly not ; but as certainly, some thought did at that moment cast a shade over her countenance, which was increased, in spite of herself, by the fear that it would be instantly observed by her father or Lucy.

Fortunately, however, just then, a knock at the door drew the attention of all parties into a different channel. It was a timid, humble, weak knock ; but on that very account it was answered with the more haste.

"It is a beggar," said Lucy, starting up, and instantly the remnants of the scanty dinner presented themselves before her housewifely though laughing eye.

"It is from poor Molly Simpson, I fear," said the curate, rising instinctively for his hat; "she was near her departure for the eternal world when I read the prayers for the sick to her this morning, before I went to Widow Tomlinson's. Poor creature! it is a blessed release to her; but God help the five little ones she leaves behind, motherless and fatherless."

Alas! it was one of those five little ones that had knocked at the door, and now stood at it shivering with cold, faint with hunger, weeping with fright and grief, and holding in her small attenuated hand a bottle not bigger than one of those from which a fine lady's maid scents her lady's handkerchief, and occasionally her own, with *eau de mille fleurs* at fifteen shillings the *flacon*.

"Mammy was taken so bad, and rolled her eyes, and said, 'Mr. Slender,'—and sister Jenny thought a drop of red wine would give her some strength."

"Red wine!" said Mr. Slender, speaking in a low tone, as if to himself, as Lucy held out to him the lilliputian decanter; "what it is to be poor! I have not had such a thing in my house these three years save that which the young gentleman sent in last Sunday, and all that was left is given away already."

"There is the bottle of raisin," said Margaret, "that Mrs. Lawson sent us after the christening; perhaps, poor thing, she would not know the difference."

"Perhaps not, dear child,—with the poor, anything that is not beer, or spirits, is wine; but I fear she is too far gone to derive benefit from any earthly cordial. Fill this tiny affair, however, Lucy, from good Mrs. Lawson's bottle, and bring me my great coat, and I will take it to the poor woman myself."

"Dear father!" said Margaret, "but you are tired, and the night is bad, is it not?"

"No matter, my child; the poor woman has no time to wait for a change in the weather. I shall not be long away, if she be as I fear. I shall look in at the House of Industry as I go, to speak about the little ones; but, however, you will have tea ready by the time I come back, and I should not mind if I saw a couple of eggs with it, for I am faintish myself, having walked eight miles since dinner"—which

dinner, *entre nous*, dear reader, for there was no occasion to say so before the young performer, had only consisted of roasted potatoes, marshalled round a small slice of bacon ; on the same principle that a poor Irishman places a morsel of red herring on the table graced by his dozen spalpeens, towards which each points "the cratur, bursting and smiling, through its jacket," to give it the fanciful relish which they pointedly call "potatoes and point."

"Yes, it shall all be ready by the time you come back," said Lucy, as she lighted the good man to the door, and then ran into the kitchen to *make*, as the phrase is, the kettle boil.

That pretty little kitchen ! ah, readers, if you had seen it, you would have thought everything prepared in it, however simple, must needs be excellent. A neat little fireplace, with a little oven on one side, a little boiler on the other ; a little dresser, white as cream-cheese, with two drawers, one for the table-linen, the other for the homelier department of dusters, pudding-cloths, and similar indispensables of good management ; the plate *creel* (I like these old Saxon words) above, with its neat service of willow pattern for use, and its antique dishes of yellow delf for show ; the shelf below, with its range of pans and kettles, which Gerard Dow himself, might have been proud to immortalize on canvas ; and then the square walnut table in the middle ; the four chairs of the same material ; the

"Nicely-sanded floor ;

The varnish'd clock, that tick'd behind the door ;"

and the queenly tabby, that held her throne upon a morsel of carpet in the chimney-corner. Sooth to say, it was, as Miss Emily Eleonora would have expressed it, "a love of a place," and reflected credit on the active hands that kept it so. Perhaps, to own the truth, it was on Lucy that the care of this very essential department of comfort in every *ménage*, small or great, principally devolved. It was her special territory : she would have detected in an instant a finger mark on the dresser, or a footstep on the floor, and would have screamed with surprise and indignation at the sight of a plate or a pan out of its proper place. We will leave her, then, in her own domain, poisoning the kettle,

and caressing the cat, who had just then a double share of her attention, as being the nursing mother of three most frolicksome and diverting kittens, one of whom Lucy had chosen for herself, and given it the name of Daisy-face, whilst we return to the little parlour, now very indistinctly illuminated by the newly-replenished fire.

There is something excessively pretty and interesting in the gleams of uncertain light falling on a youthful and soul-fraught countenance—now all irradiated, as it were, with hope and joy; now wrapped in shadow, like those dismal realities of life, which in an instant put to flight, and too often for ever, its earliest and brightest illusions. Talk of your *tableaux vivants* and your nonsense, where half a dozen coxcombs, however *blasés*, and half a dozen belles, however *passées*, put themselves into attitudes to be admired or criticised, as Madonnas and St. Johns, Beatrice di Cencis, and Caesar Borgias; or what not. I wish they could have seen Margaret Slender, this same evening, sitting between the trellised windows of her little parlour at twilight hour, with her knitting, like her namesake in Goethe's awful creation of "Faust," the fitful flashes from the fire now lighting up her golden tresses, now veiling her in obscurity, like Domenichino's Sibyl waiting for her inspirations. Had she been really such, the young man, who thus unexpectedly found himself alone with her, could not have gazed upon her with more holy admiration. Many, many minutes was he silent before her; yet, grudging the silence of each, in the fear that the abstraction from all the rest of the world which brought them so near to each other might be interrupted. Margaret was as silent as himself; but then she had her knitting: after all, women have some advantages over men. Not that knitting-needles were quite so much in keeping with the character of the Persic Sibyl as a swan's quill, half a yard long, would have been; still they gave her some excuse for her downcast eyes, and for her appearing not to perceive that the young man had come nearer and nearer to her, till she felt his breath upon her swanlike neck, as it curved over her quivering fingers.

"I did not know till this afternoon," said he in a voice tremulous with emotion, "that I was capable of envy."

"And what can have taught you the existence of such a passion here?" said Margaret, endeavouring to smile; "there can be nothing to envy in our humble lot."

"There is everything to admire in it, to attract, and to attach," said the young man; "but I was thinking of Coleridge—I envy him, I feel I do: why did you weep whilst I recited his verses?"

He put this question in so low a tone, that he was obliged to draw still nearer to her to hear her answer, and as he spoke, she felt his breath upon her cheek, instead of her neck. Fortunate it was, for both her and him, that the uncertain blaze just then chose to pout and splutter, and pretend to extinguish itself.

"Why do you ask me?" she replied; but it was in such a voice! the dove,

"When first its golden couplets are disclosing,"

never sent forth its new-waked fondness in a note more tremulous, or more tender.

"*Why* do I ask you?" the young man said, or rather whispered; "because I am jealous of those tears; I envy the poet that could draw them forth. Oh! if I might hope that I had any share in them, that

"So I won *my* Genevieve,"

my Margaret;" and he again knelt, and sunk his head upon her lap.

It was the first time she had ever heard herself thus addressed by her name from the lips of a man, save her father; and now she heard it from the lips of him whose sole image had, from the first moment of her beholding him, engrossed her every thought and feeling.

Poor dear Margaret! her heart swelled with ineffable feelings of mingled delight and maidenly modesty; and in the sweet confusion of their novelty, she burst afresh into tears, and passionately kissed the glossy chestnut curls of that head that durst not raise itself up, to read its destiny in her countenance. The moment she had done so, she was covered with blushes. Yet she did not repent what she had

done, for she was the child of nature, and felt only how sweet it was to return the love that made her blessed beyond all that she had ever conceived of bliss.

"Perhaps I am wrong," said she, struggling with her sobs ; " but it is so new, so delightful to me to feel as I do ; to admire, to revere, to love ! Yes, it was *you* I venerated ; not the poetry ; it was *your mind*, not his ; whatever you admire would affect me the same, as beautiful and good."

And again she involuntarily inclined her head to his ; but she recollected herself in time. The youth, however, had perceived the involuntary impulse, and throwing his arms round her, his countenance radiant with delight, he pressed her, in a fervour of passion, chastened by his respect for her lovely and confiding frankness, to his heart.

" O my Margaret !" he exclaimed, " blessed, thrice blessed was the moment I first beheld those dove-like eyes, shining, as they do now, through tears of sympathy ; and this dear cheek,"—and here he no doubt accidentally touched it with his burning lips,—"*glowing with a generous courage !* From that moment I hoped that I had found the destined partner, the congenial soul allotted me—the being created to cherish and perfect all my nobler faculties, not only in this, our state of trial and probation here below, but through countless states of eternal being."

Beautiful enthusiasm and purity of youth ! its first emotions are always to array its most ardent desires in the loveliest forms—the good—the true—and to give them immortality of duration. And well it was for him who now sued at the feet of the humble daughter of the poor curate that he did so. Her unsophisticated mind and virgin heart would have shrunk from the passion of a prince couched in any other guise ; but, as it was, it seemed to her as holy as delightful to love. The silent reveries that had lately so mixed up with her daily avocations, the gentle visions that had made her nightly dreams a new and heavenly existence to her, seemed now all realized, and for a few minutes her bliss was perfect ; but soon other thoughts occurred to reduce it to the standard of human enjoyment.

" What would my father do without me ?" she exclaimed ; " and what could you do with me, poor as I am ?"

To the first of these questions the young man replied by

kissing away the tear with which it was accompanied ; to the second by a joyous smile, and an assurance that he was not afraid of her poverty, if she was not afraid of his.

" You see," said Margaret, putting her hand into his with an air of sweet encouragement, " how we live, but you can scarcely imagine upon how little ; and all that I do for my dear father, I should be too happy to do for you."

The grateful acknowledgments which this simple declaration of devotedness drew forth were cut short in their commencement by the entrance of Lucy with the tea-tray.

" My poor Lucy," said Margaret, starting up and covered with blushes ; " I had quite forgotten the tea. You have had all the trouble. Let me fetch the kettle."

" No," said Lucy, laughing. " You have had your trouble, too. Let me finish, now that I have begun."

" The trouble of entertaining me, I suppose you mean," said the young man, attempting to take the tray from her ; " and now, to vindicate myself from the charge of utter laziness, I will have the honour of being your footman."

" Nay, that you shall not, I will keep all the credit to myself," said Lucy, setting the tea-things on the table, and running away, he ran after her, and in a minute he returned with the nice bright kettle, shifting it from hand to hand, and pretending to suffer tortures from the heat of it ; whilst Lucy laughed at his grimaces, with all the glee of a child, as she was ; and Margaret felt additional delight in seeing him thus make himself at home under their humble roof, where it was her sweetest hope that he would never more be considered as a stranger.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN INVESTIGATION.

It must not be supposed that Miss Emily Eleonora Pluffy flattered herself that the suspicious trespass of the stranger, and Jem's alarming allusion to the acquaintance she had made with him at the cottage, would pass over as easily when she was left alone with her mamma, as that prudent lady thought it better to let it do in the presence

of her guests. Accordingly, no sooner had the gentlemen taken their leave, than she prepared herself for a specimen of the inductive system of eliciting information.

"Emmy, my dear," began Mrs. Pluffy, "it is very odd that drunken Jem Blacksmith could find no other lie to tell, but one about you—for I do suppose it is all a lie, what he said about your going to meet young men at his house?"

"I never went there to meet young *men*, mamma," said Miss Emily with a very accurate distinction in her own mind, as she spoke, between the plural and the singular number. "The fact is, I don't suppose he knew what he was saying."

"Well, my dear, but at any rate he knew that he had been holding a horse for somebody that got over the garden-wall; and as you were in the garden at the time—which was very imprudent so late in the evening, and with your headache too—why, you must have seen him. Was he a young man or an old one?"

Here Miss Emily was at a nonplus. Her mamma having assumed as a certainty that she had seen the wall-scaler, she hesitated whether it was more advisable to acknowledge that she had had a glimpse of him, or to pretend utter ignorance alike of his person and his proceedings; but recollecting that Clement Courtney might inadvertently give a different account of the matter, she steered a middle course, saying,—

"I scarcely know; I certainly fancied I did see somebody near the summer-house."

"And what did he look like?" said the doctor, adjusting the cushions of his arm-chair; "a gentleman, or a vulgar fellow?"

"Not vulgar, certainly," said Miss Emily, with a positiveness that convinced her sister she had taken a much nearer survey of him, whoever he might be, than she chose to acknowledge.

"Was he young or old?" continued Mrs. Pluffy.

"Not very old," said Miss Emily: "rather young—that is—as old as—I really don't know."

"Why did you not call out, child, as soon as you saw him?" said the doctor.

"Were you not dreadfully terrified?" inquired Miss Pluffy. "I should have been frightened out of my senses. Indeed, I was obliged to lean on Mr. Muggins only with hearing of it."

"I was rather alarmed at first," said Miss Emily—"that is, I trembled very much; indeed, I do now—you see how my hands shake; but I was sure he did not mean to hurt me."

"How could you be sure of that, my dear?" said her mamma; "he could not come for any good. What did he say for himself? Did he speak to you?"

This was a poser. Miss Emily coloured.

"Come," said the doctor, "tell the plain truth. I want, at any rate, to have my mind set at ease, that he did not come on the premises with any felonious intent."

"I don't think he had any felonious thoughts," said Miss Emily.

"Then pray what do you imagine he had a thought of?" asked Mrs. Pluffy, with more impatience than anger; "perhaps you fancy he came after you girls."

"No, I do not fancy that," said Miss Emily, her mind still retaining the distinction between the singular and the plural; "but I think he came over the wall, in a sort of spirit of enterprise, in the wildness of his gaiety, he is so animated, so enthusiastic!" Here Miss Emily, in the fulness of her admiration, outstepped her precaution.

"Animated! enthusiastic! what nonsense are you thinking of? Why, Emmy, do you know him, then?"

"No, mamma, not exactly; but I think, indeed I am sure, I have seen him before."

"And who is he then, my dear?" said Mrs. Pluffy, instantly soothed by the idea that one or both of her daughters had made a conquest possibly worth following up.

"I really don't know his name, mamma."

"Well, but you know where you have seen him, at any rate—come, my dear, tell me all that you do know. I do not suppose you have anything to be afraid or ashamed of, or else you are not a daughter of mine, or Doctor Pluffy's, either."

Miss Emily, thus encouraged, ventured to acknowledge

that she suspected—that is, she rather thought the imagined robber was no other than a young gentleman whom she had accidentally caught a glimpse of, one day, in Betty's cottage ; and who, she had since remarked, had once followed her, at a distance, when she was walking.

Miss Pluffy gave her head a little toss, at this part of Miss Emily's confession, but Mrs. Pluffy took it into her gravest consideration.

"It is very singular behaviour in him, whoever he may be, said she, "and not very gentleman-like, I must say. Why, if he wants to become acquainted with you, does he not get introduced to the doctor at once, like a gentleman?"

Why, indeed ! Miss Emily had never asked herself the question before, and now she could not give it anything like a satisfactory answer.

"Certainly, certainly," said the doctor, half asleep, and half awake. "I believe there are very few people that would not say I am ready enough to receive overtures of acquaintance from persons of respectability and consideration."

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Pluffy ; "Mr. Muggins said to-day how hospitable and condescending papa was, and what a pleasure it was to come to the rectory, and Mr. Muggins is a very good judge of propriety. I am sure I should have been very much amazed if he had behaved as this person has done."

This was spoken in a tone which said, plainly enough, "My admirer against yours, any day."

"You may safely bet on that," said Augustus, who, during the investigation, had been walking up and down the room, fumigating it with a cigar, according to the polite custom of young men of the present day, in the presence of ladies. "Muggins must drink something more exhilarating than his own beer before you catch him scaling garden-walls to look at pretty girls, by moonlight : not but what, to do him justice, Miss Pluffy, he can take a gate, on emergency, in very decent style, and cuts a respectable figure enough when he is mounted on that splendid roan of his—your malt and hops men always have a good show of horse-flesh. By the bye, that reminds me again of Orville. I am certain it

was his horse that drunken fellow was holding ; whether or not, it was Orville that galloped away upon him."

"I should take it very ill in Lord Orville, if he came after my daughters in that clandestine, unhandsome sort of a way," said the doctor, rousing himself at the mention of a titled Trinity man, "when he has been so often invited to visit us in open day, and must know how welcome he would be."

"That he must, naturally," said Mrs. Pluffy ; "but, however, we do not know that this was Lord Orville, and even if it was, we ought not to condemn him unheard. If it really was, and he should indeed wish to become acquainted with dear Emily, I do not doubt but he will behave as a nobleman and a man of honour ought to do."

"He'll manage it all his own way—you may depend upon that," said Augustus, puffing out his sentences one after another, each in its respective volume of smoke. "I'll defy anybody—to drive him ;—and then he hates—anything hum-drum. I have heard him say—that, if he ever was to be married,—it should be nowhere else—but at Gretna Green,—and that he would—not give a farthing—for a girl—that—would not—run away—with him—at an—hour's notice."

"Very foolish notions," said Mrs. Pluffy, "and very derogatory to a man of his rank. I should be exceedingly sorry for a daughter of mine to hear him talk such nonsense."

"Well,—I believe you may—set your mind at ease—on that head,—for, after all,—it is not likely that he should be the trespasser, or that he should have any intention of playing the Romeo here, in any way. I suspect he is after other game."

"Well, we don't want to know anything more about him," said Mrs. Pluffy, in a tone of peevish impatience, that sounded something like disappointment. "Ring the bell for the tray, and hot water. Emily, you shall have something warm, for I am sure you must have taken a chill."

Emily, however, had not done any such thing ; for she thought she knew better than her brother and sister, and mamma and papa, all put together, respecting the impression

she had made on the stranger ; and when her sister, on their going to bed, gravely remarked that she hoped Emily would do nothing romantic, or unlady-like, in throwing herself in the way of this adventurer or impostor, as he would most likely turn out, she only thought how much more delightful it would be to be Lady Orville than Mrs. Muggins.

The next morning Mrs. Pluffy, in her turn, was seized with an irrepressible desire to pay visits of charity, in a mist. She therefore sallied forth alone, desiring her daughters to remain at home till she returned, in order that should any gentlemen call, there might be somebody in the way to receive them.

The cunning lady, on going out, took a path exactly opposite to that which was her real destination ; but after following it till she was out of sight of the house, she struck into a by-lane, and then regaining the road, continued steadily on, in the direction of the blacksmith's cottage, till she found herself at its threshold ; greatly to the "frustration" of Betty, who was by no means so much at her ease with the doctor's lady as with Miss Emily.

"Well, Betty, how are you ? how are your children ?" said Mrs. Pluffy, in a condescending tone ; for she had been cogitating within herself, on her way, whether she should adopt the encouraging or the magisterial style, and she finally settled it that the gentle would be most politic.

"Very well, thank you, ma'am ; I hopes your reverence's ladyship is well, and the young ladies—nice young ladies they are, I tells everybody—Miss Emily is uncommon good to me, to be sure, I must say."

"She is, indeed, very good to everybody, to do her justice, Betty, and I know she comes here very often, and I am sure it is a pleasure to me to think that she goes about doing good. It is what I have always taught her ; but I hope, Betty, you have no people come to you that it would be improper for her to see—I mean low, drunken people, that might frighten her ; for you know, Betty, your husband is sadly given that way, and, of course, he is not very particular about who may come after him."

"Oh ! why, as to that, ma'am, there's no fear ; my husband he's too fond of going out, ever to bring anybody here, of his own sort, like. I wish he would drink his beer at

home, so I tells him—it would be better for him, and me too—but he's so fond of that nasty "Cat and Bagpipes," that he runs there three or four times a day; the minute hammer's out of his hand, he's off, and would stay for hours, if I did not go after him."

"It is a sad thing for you, to be sure, Betty; but how is it that he gets money to go there with? for one would think that there was not a great deal of work to pick up in this small place—has he much to do with the young gentlemen at Cambridge?"

"Why, not much, ma'am; and truth is, it keeps us very badly off; but sometimes he gets a job or two from some of them."

"And do any of them ever come here, then?" said Mrs. Pluffy, in a tone wherein her assumed indifference would have betrayed to any more accurate observer than Betty her real anxiety to ascertain the fact.

"Sometimes they does, ma'am. There's young Mr. Courtney, as comed on Saturday, like, in a pair of shays" (meaning by which a chaise and pair), "with a young lady; and sometimes there's a few wildish chaps, as comes on a Sunday, with hack horses, that often falls lame, poor beasts, afore they gets to turnpike; and then they comes to my master to see if there's anything gotten in their shoes like, but they never come into house at all—and for matter of that, Miss Emily, or Miss Pluffy either, might come all the year round, and see nobody but me, and children like, for I've enough to do with 'em, poor things, with mending and making for 'em, without troubling my head about other folks."

"You are very right, Betty; I know you are very careful and industrious. I shall see that the doctor does not forget you at Christmas; but still, Betty, I should not like my daughter, Miss Emily Eleonora Pluffy, to come here, if there was any danger of her ever seeing any of these young gentlemen—or, rather, of their seeing her, I should say, for I am not at all afraid of her, on her own account; but Cambridge is such a place for gossip and scandal, that one does not know what may be said; and, indeed, I have had it hinted that a young man—that is, a very genteel young man, quite a gentleman—has said that he has seen her here, in your very cottage."

"The deary me!" said poor Betty, turning red and white, betwixt her fear of the rector's lady and her sympathy for the rector's daughter, "what will people say next? Why, he never set eyes upon Miss Emily, to my knowledge, but once."

"He! who do you mean, then?" demanded Mrs. Plufly with much the same feeling of satisfaction as an old sportsman experiences on turning up a hare, determined to track it round to its starting-place. Poor Betty felt herself ensnared, and thought it better to turn king's evidence against her own proper person; so she continued, in a crying tone,—

"Why, to be sure, ma'am, I arn't a-going for to tell a story, why should I? Day that Miss Emily came to me, to speak about putting my little lass to school, second that is—here, you Peggy, come here, and make a curtesy to this lady—there was a young gentleman here, as comes nows and thens, and sits a piece, and talks to me, like, and to children, because he says he likes country air, and he did, for sartain sure, see Miss Emily; and after awhile he came back to talk to me about her, and I did, to be sure, say what a nice young lady she was, and I'm sorry I did; and what grand people her papa and mamma was; no offence I hope, for I'm sure I thought no harm."

"No—no offence, Betty, nor no harm at all," said the mollified Mrs. Plufly. "There never can be any harm in speaking the truth, Betty; we are commanded to do so in the Bible, as I always tell the servants; and as, indeed, Doctor Plufly is kind enough to explain, continually, from the pulpit, if people would but listen to him. But who is this young gentleman, Betty? What is his name? I mean; you must know that, and I ought to know it too, as you must see—because, you may be sure, it would be very disagreeable to the doctor if his daughters made any acquaintance below themselves; and if this young man should bow to Miss Emily, or, perhaps, even speak to her, in Cambridge, or at any public place, it would be very improper in her to take any notice of him at all, unless we knew he was quite respectable."

"To be sure, ma'am," said Betty, more and more awed by the increasing importance of Mrs. Plufly's manner. "It is very right you should know all about everything, and

'specially about anybody that wanted to be acquainted with the young ladies ; but, I'm sure, as to this here young man, I can't say I knows anything about him, nor more does my good man, I believe, neither, any more than shoeing his horse for him, a time by chance—he said, that day he was talking to Miss Emily, his name was Norval, or Orval, or some sitch. Somebody that saw his horse, when my husband was a-shoeing it, said it was Lord Orville's, and that it had won a match of some sort, but I don't know nothing about sitch folks myself. I only know he's a very good-natured, civil young gentleman—my little ones are very fond of him, he's so funny like with 'em—he acts sometimes to 'em, like the player people, to make 'em laugh, and I'm sure I can't help laughing myself, to see him take off my poor man, when he's got a drop too much—he does it so nat'ral like, for all he never touches anything himself, he says, but water—it's no laughing matter to me though, for it was only last night that Jem gave me such a dunch on my arm, when he was in one of his tantrums, I can scarcely lift it to my head."

And the poor woman began to weep, and show her bruises, which was generally the conclusion of her histories. Mrs. Pluffy expressed her condolence in the form of a half-crown piece, and returned to the Rectory, her mind full, all the way, of the thought that her youngest daughter had actually, wittingly or unwittingly, made a conquest of a peer. A titled son-in-law, the doctor in lawn sleeves, Augustus in canonicals or regimentals, as might seem most advisable, and Miss Pluffy presented at court by her ladyship, her sister ; such were the visions that brightened her fancy, and which she lost no time in communicating to her portly husband, as soon as she could get him closeted, secure from interruption.

The suggestions of ambition, however improbable the form in which they might be presented, were certain of finding a welcome in Doctor Pluffy's ample bosom. "Certainly, my dear," he said, when Mrs. Pluffy had finished her account—"certainly, it does appear, on the face of the thing, by no means impossible but that this young man may be Lord Orville himself ; and in that case, why, certainly,"—he paused to take a pinch of snuff, for ideas of preferment, precedence, and distinction, flowed in upon him with such rapidity, that he could not give them utterance. After

replacing his gold snuff-box in his waistcoat pocket, he continued, "Why, certainly, much benefit to us all might accrue from the connection. Lord Orville might do something for Augustus, who, I am afraid, will never do much for himself; not in the church, at any rate, he does not keep up his consequence enough; indeed, I should not put him into it if I knew what else to do with him; and then, as for myself, I think I may venture to hope that his lordship would not, if he looked throughout the whole clerical circle, see any one on whom dignities would sit better than they would on me. I deserve something," he added with an air of proud humility; "I do not presume to say merely for my own merits, but for the pains I have always taken to uphold and maintain the importance of the church and its relation with the state, and the respectability of the clergy, as a connecting link between the aristocracy and the people."

"Nay, doctor, I am sure your merits must be well enough known to everybody, and then what patience you have had too; waiting, for years, as you have done."

"Well, my dear, if matters stand as they seem to do with Lord Orville and dear Emily, I may not have to wait much longer; but now we must mind how we play our cards—they are of a difficult kind. I had better not seem to know anything about the affair; for if I did, as Lord Orville is not yet of age, though very near it, I believe there might be some obstacles thrown in the way of his attachment by his father, the Earl of Maltravers. It would be better if he would let Augustus bring him to the house at once; but, from all accounts, he likes to do things his own way; so the fact is, we must not seem to take any notice if Emily should, now and then, walk out alone."

"No; nor if she sits in the garden a little late sometimes, or takes her book into the hermitage. I shall tell her sister not to make any observation upon it, nor Augustus neither; only she must mind and wrap up, she looks so wretchedly when she has a cold."

So it was tacitly understood, between the plotting pair, that his lordship was to come over the garden-wall again, whenever he thought proper; nay, the doctor even said, he liked his spirit; and the very same act for which he would have committed a trespasser of low degree to the house of

correction, appeared to him, when looked upon as the frolic of a nobleman, something extremely gallant, and altogether a very fair subject of rejoicing.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

How true it is that joy and grief, in the circle of human life, chase each other alternately like shadows on the grass. Mr. Shirley's visit, the day before yesterday, cheered my girls greatly, and I felt myself all the better for it ; but I was made very uneasy last night by a report, which I heard from one of my parishioners, that Thomson, the wine-merchant, at Norwich, had put an end to his existence, in consequence of the derangement of his affairs. Eleven or twelve years ago I became security for him, to the amount of one hundred pounds, towards the purchase of the premises where he has ever since carried on his business. I rendered him this service on account of his being a distant relation of my beloved wife. I have always heard of him as doing well, and I believed he had long since paid the whole of the purchase-money ; but, from accident or inattention, I have never had my security returned to me ; and, to say the truth, I never thought of reminding him of it. The imprudence of this neglect on my part came painfully across my mind, the moment that the rumour of his death reached me ; and my neighbour Allspice, having offered to give me a cast in his tax-cart this morning, as far as Cambridge, and to bring me back again, I resolved to go and call on Mr. Alderman Fielding, who used to have considerable dealings, in the way of business, with Thomson, and to inquire of him the full particulars of the matter.

The alderman received me very civilly, and set my mind somewhat at ease. It seems, from his account, that the poor man had not been fortunate in some speculations he entered into, about a year ago, and some say that he had latterly become a little too much addicted to tasting his stock-in-trade. The alderman had heard the sad report of his death ; but as he had had a business letter from him only two days before, written in his accustomed style, he imagined there must be

some mistake or exaggeration in the rumour, as he had had no official communication of the event ; and it appeared to him perfectly incredible that a man of Thomson's easy, social disposition, should lay violent hands on himself. As the worthy alderman did not seem to disquiet himself concerning the affair, I strove to follow his example ; nevertheless, I felt a load on my spirits ; I could not talk any part of the way back, but I put up a prayer to my Heavenly Father to give me fortitude and resignation under any trial with which He in His infinite wisdom might be pleased to visit me. My gloomy thoughts were put to flight as soon as I got within sight of my own door, by the joyous countenance of my Lucy, who ran out to meet me. She was breathless with impatience.

"A letter from Mr. Shirley, papa," she called out, as soon as she was within hearing ; "Margaret has got it for you ; it cost sixpence—it is a double letter, from Cambridge. You know it is only threepence for a single letter. Besides, papa," she added, in a coaxing tone, putting her arm within mine, "we held it up to the light, and we saw a bank note in it. Only think ! it must be for five pounds."

"I hope not, my child," said I ; "it is five times as much as he could afford to give, or I ought to receive ; and pray, what business had you to inspect my letter, and hold it up to the light ? Do you not know that doing so was, in fact, opening it, as far as your will and wish were concerned ? You are two daughters of Eve, both of you, and I shall punish you for your curiosity."

"O now, pray, papa—but I know you are not really angry ?"

"Am I not ? Well, we shall see."

And accordingly, with as severe a countenance as I could find in my heart to assume, I marched into the house. Lucy followed me in dismay, and, by some telegraphic sign, communicated her alarm to her sister, who came instantly to me, and, with a deprecating air, put the letter into my hand. It was from Cambridge, sure enough, and double ; and, as it appears to me, in the writing of Mr. Shirley, though I have only seen it once, and this was in his note, in pencil, from the inn. I saw they were both astonished when, instead of breaking the seal, I leisurely hung up my hat, and went to

change my coat. When I returned, Lucy offered me her scissors, and Margaret her penknife, which she was sure would do better—they were out of their wits with joy and curiosity. I put away the scissors with one hand, and the knife with the other.

"You see, children," said I, "it is more difficult to bear good fortune than bad with equanimity. I have often admired your cheerfulness and courage, when we have been labouring under the greatest trials, and knew not whether we should have bread for the morrow; and now, the very first movement of fortune's wheel turns your heads—you are giddy—you cannot keep your feet steady; nevertheless, calmness and moderation are such essential virtues, more especially in your sex, that it is my duty to teach them to you, whenever an opportunity of so doing may occur. I shall, therefore, not open this letter till after tea."

Margaret assured me that it was not the thought of the money that had made her appear so impatient, however timely its arrival might be; but that she was delighted with the idea of Mr. Shirley's being so punctual, and showing himself grateful.

"Yes," said Lucy, "we both said we only wanted to hear what he had said, not to see what he had sent."

"You will know both," I said, "in little more than two hours. In the meanwhile, I have got to attend a meeting at the vestry."

I then sat down, to enter the important event in my journal, and Lucy is now folding a handkerchief for me to put round my neck when I go out, poor dears!—they look so humble and crest-fallen, that my heart relents; but it would not be right, they must learn to bear disappointments, and patience is an admirable lesson to curiosity.

Our joy is turned to mourning: the letter with the money is not from Mr. Shirley, but from Dr. Pluffy. He replies, in answer to my petition, that imagining it to be so understood between us, at our last interview, he shortly after appointed a successor to take my place at Easter. "Nevertheless," he adds, "as I should be sorry to put any gentleman to inconvenience, I enclose you the third, and final quarter

of your salary in advance, in order that you may be provided with the means to take such steps as you may deem advisable in search of another curacy. I hope you may speedily find one more proportioned to your merits than you seemed to think Creykedale, the last time you talked with me on the subject ; but, as a friend (!), I advise you to lose no time in making your inquiries, as you may depend upon it, however large you may imagine the number of curacies, you will find the number of candidates for them larger still ; and as I really wish to serve you, I will, if agreeable to you, order the Reverend Mr. Snakegrass, whom I have fixed upon as your successor, and who is a very respectful and moderate-minded man, to do duty for you during any occasional absences your affairs may require you to make." He concludes with having "the honour to be my humble servant," &c., &c.

Margaret and Lucy turned as pale as death, when they found the letter was from Dr. Pluffy, instead of Mr. Shirley; and that the bank-note, which they had imagined the tribute of honesty and gratitude, was the last and bitter portion of the wages of so many years' services.

Lucy burst into tears, and, throwing herself into the arm-chair, covered her face with her apron. Margaret said not a word, but went upstairs into her own room. My hand shook, as I still held the letter which contained my dismissal, in form. I went into my study, and shutting the door, I fell on my knees before my Father, which "seeth in secret." At first I was much disturbed in mind by hearing the sobs of my poor Lucy, but gradually the spirit of prayer supported and elevated my soul, and I was enabled to say from my heart :

"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in Thee : yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."

Not hearing Lucy, I went back into the parlour ; she was on her knees, with her hands clasped together, and her face towards the chair. I shut the door softly, and went back into my study ; I did not leave it again until I heard Margaret speaking to her sister ; when I went in, I found them sitting together in the window-seat, holding each other's hands. I perceived by Margaret's eyes, that her

courage had not supported her in the solitude of her chamber. They both looked at me tremblingly—I saw that they dreaded lest they should read despair in my countenance; but when they saw that I was tolerably cheerful, they brightened up a little. I put the letter into my desk, with an air of composure, and we did not once mention the subject during the whole evening. With them this silence was the result of their tender solicitude to prevent my mind from recurring to the blow it had received; with me, it was maintained in the fear that if I broke it I might appear weak before my children, who have a right to look to me for an example of fortitude and resignation. But, alas! I may say with Jeremiah,

“When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint within me.”

“Woes cluster—rare are solitary woes.”

I went this morning to the post myself, for I had a sort of presentiment that I should have some intelligence of a trying nature, and I did not wish to receive it immediately in the presence of my girls. My fears were verified—I found a packet for me, too heavy to betide any good. It was from Messrs. Trickem and Trouncem, attorneys at Norwich, informing me of the demise of this unhappy Thomson, who, I fear, from the manner in which they mention the event, has indeed hastened his exit from this world. It seems that his debts are enormous: ten thousand pounds! For my part, I have no notion how any man can be trusted to such an amount. The attorneys, however, make the embarrassed state of his affairs, and the necessity of as speedy a settlement of them as may be, their excuse for enclosing a copy of my bond, and requesting the immediate payment of it into their hands, on account of the executor, Mr. Wilson, of Norwich, or that I will give security for its being liquidated within a given period, and for the payment of legal interest upon it in the meanwhile.

What an unlooked-for misfortune! Who would give security for a man so poor as myself? How could I, in common honesty, ask any one to do so? and even then, how could I pay the interest? and as for the principal, where shall I ever

find a hundred pounds? If everything I have in the world were sold, it would scarcely, in a place like this, bring a hundred shillings. My dear wife's small fortune was all consumed in her long illness; I was even obliged to sell her piano, at a loss, after her lamented death, to defray her funeral expenses.

Thomson always passed for a rich man, and seemed very punctual in matters of business. Who could have thought of his coming to such an end! In what misery may it not involve me! Alas! if I could only retain my liberty, methinks I could bear any other evil that might befall me; but I must inevitably go to prison, unless, which I dare not hope, Mr. Wilson should be a compassionate man; for as to thinking of payment, it is a thing utterly impossible.

"I am poor and needy, make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer, O Lord, make no long tarrying."

We should do all things, according to our judgment, for the best, as if we had only our own endeavours to depend upon; and then leave the result of them to the Lord, in devout reliance upon his Divine Providence, and with entire submission to His Holy Will. I therefore, after breakfast, wrote to Mr. Wilson, explaining to him my utter inability, to pay the security. I told him that if there was no alternative, he must send me to gaol. If he have any feelings of humanity, he will be touched with my situation; if not, he must do with me even as he will. I shall deliver myself into his hands.

When I returned from taking my letter to the post, I determined to put the courage of my children to the test. I ought to prepare them for the worst that may happen; I told them, therefore, of the death of Thomson, of the security I had given for him, and of the too probable consequences of my imprudence, in not having asked him to restore it to me years ago.

They listened to me with as much amazement as grief. "To prison!" Margaret repeated to herself, then melting into tears, she threw her arms round me.

"Ah, my dear father!" she cried, "how is it that you, who never do harm to any human being, should be so unfortunate in everything? But I will go myself to Norwich; I will walk; to-morrow I will set off. I will throw myself at Mr.

Wilson's feet, and I will kneel there till he shall have promised me that he will take no proceedings against you."

"No," said Lucy, sobbing, "you shall not go, it would do no good; tradespeople will be tradespeople; he would not strike one shilling off my father's bond for all your tears and supplications. I will go to him instead of you, and offer to serve him as a servant, or a slave, on bread and water, till I have worked out my dear father's debt, and you shall stay with him, to wait upon him and console him; you are more a companion for him than I am—what could he do without you?"

Whilst they thus suggested one plan after another, they became more composed; nevertheless, they could not hide from themselves how futile, in reality, all their schemes were; and at last Margaret said,—

"It is of no use to talk of it any more now. Let us wait for Mr. Wilson's answer: if he be cruel, we must submit. The Almighty watches over prisons as well as over palaces, and if you should be forced to go to gaol, my dear father, you may be happier there than you have been here of late; we have had such incessant anxieties. You have nothing to be afraid of. You are innocent, and it is no disgrace to be poor. Lucy and I will go to service, and our wages will find you with all you want. I should not be ashamed even of begging; nay, my dear father, do not shake your head, there is something holy and beautiful in begging for a parent. We will come to see you as often as ever we can get leave to go out. We shall be well taken care of. Yes, we shall have a blessing on our labours; we need not make ourselves unhappy any longer."

"You are right, Margaret," said Lucy; "those who tremble at what may happen to them have no trust in God. I will not be cast down any more; it costs no more to be merry than sad. Perhaps something good will happen to us. It is not New Year's Day yet."

My pretty Lucy is of a disposition to find out a rainbow in every cloud; nevertheless, she cheered my heart. Mr. Shirley was right enough when he said I had guardian angels at my side. I have much to be thankful for.

When I had written the last line in my journal, I wished to bow down at the footstool of the Lord, and pour out my

soul before Him in prayer, but a sudden faintness overpowered me. I threw myself on the bed. I believe I slept ; at any rate, I remained a long time in a state of insensibility—three or four hours, I should think—for when I awoke it was nearly dark. My daughters had covered me with a counterpane, thinking I was asleep. I got up, but I felt very feeble ; my body is, indeed, brought low, but my mind, thanks be to God ! has regained its strength.

When I went downstairs, I found Mr. Shirley sitting by the fire. I know that young man has a feeling heart, for he took my hand with an affectionate pressure that vibrated through my breast. He saw that we were sad, but he was too delicate to appear to notice it. I could not prevail upon myself to tell him of my involvement with Thomson, it is such a reflection upon my prudence ; but I informed him of Doctor Pluffy's letter, in order to account for my gravity, for I was afraid he would think the seeming coldness of my reception of him was on account of his not yet having paid me his little debt. I have not the heart to forbid his visits, he appears so happy with us, and makes himself so entirely at home. He told me, poor young man, with tears in his eyes, that he had neither father nor mother, and that he counted it quite a blessing to be allowed to come to us in a domestic way : no doubt, it reminds him of his own fireside. How, then, can I say to him otherwise than that he is welcome ? besides, it perhaps keeps him out of the dissipated society which he is so exposed to, by his unfortunate profession. I often wish he was anything but what he is. My neighbours, too, may, I fear, think it unseemly that I should be thus familiar with a player. I fancy sometimes they look upon me more coldly than they were wont to do ; but, perhaps, they may have heard that I am in disgrace with Doctor Pluffy.

Mr. Shirley coloured with indignation when I told him of the doctor's letter—his temples and forehead were quite red ; but he seemed to think of it more as an affront, "an ungentlemanly thing," as he strangely expressed himself, than as an injury striking at the very root of my means of subsistence : he is yet too young to think much of pecuniary things.

"I shall tell the doctor what I think of his behaviour, one day," said he.

"Are you, then, acquainted with him personally?" I inquired.

"Enough to speak my mind to him, when an opportunity may occur," he replied.

"Do you know the young ladies?" asked Lucy.

"About as well as I do their father," he said. .

"They are very clever, are they not?" continued Lucy.

"I have not found it out," replied the young man, with rather an odd sort of smile; "but the youngest is, I believe, of a disposition rather amiable than otherwise." And here the discourse dropped, for neither my daughters nor myself had the spirits to continue it; and the young man, seeing that we could not shake off the burthen that oppressed us, considerably took his leave. Margaret went with him to the door, to open it for him, and I think he said something kind and consolatory to her as he went out, for her countenance wore an expression of hope and serenity when she returned, that seemed to cheer my heart also.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him."

CHAPTER XXV.

COLLEGE BILLS AND THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS.

AFTER the explanation that had taken place between Mrs. Pluffy and the doctor, things went on much as usual at Gormanton. Miss Pluffy sat with her embroidery at the window, watching for visitors; and Miss Emily Eleonora pursued her rural rambles, much to the advantage of her complexion, and apparently of her spirits.

One morning Miss Pluffy's patience was rewarded by the sight of a couple of equestrians approaching the house. In one of them she recognised Clement Courtney; the other she did not know, and, therefore, naturally decided that it must be Lord Orville, and so it was.

"Good morning, Mrs. Pluffy ! good morning, Miss Pluffy !" said Clement. "Give me leave to present my friend, Lord Orville."

And then the parties all bowed and smiled to each other, and Mrs. Pluffy said,—

"Very happy, I'm sure, to see his lordship, and the doctor would have been so happy too, but he's gone to Cambridge, to a public meeting, and Emily is out walking. How very unlucky it is !—how sorry she will be !—and how sorry the doctor will be !"

And then his lordship hoped he should be more fortunate another time, and Mrs. Pluffy hoped that now he had found his way to the Rectory, they should have the pleasure of seeing him very often ; and then his lordship bowed, and said something about being "very happy ;" and then the conversation turned upon the country, and then upon Cambridge, and then upon amusements, and then upon the theatre.

"I believe there is a very clever actor at Barnwell now," said Miss Pluffy, "of the name of Shirley."

Courtney looked at Lord Orville with a peculiar expression. Miss Pluffy thought she detected a heightened colour on the brow of each.

"Yes," said his lordship, "he is a very clever actor, and a very clever fellow too ; he and I have had many a frolic together. I played Aimwell once to his Archer, in the 'Beau Stratagem,' to a select audience, in a private barn."

Mrs. Pluffy drew herself up.

"But I thought," said she stiffly, "that this Shirley was a professional player, a regular actor."

"Why, as for that," said his lordship, "he is and he is not. In the first place, he is not regular in anything any more than I am. I persuaded him to come to Cambridge with me this term, by way of companionship, and so he thought he would just astonish the people by giving them a specimen of his histrionic abilities."

Mrs. Pluffy and her daughter were lost in amazement that a young man of Lord Orville's rank should choose a person so much beneath him for a companion. Had it been Doctor Pluffy's son that he had formed an intimacy with, that would have been only natural and becoming. Their

inward cogitations on the subject were interrupted by the entrance of the footman, with a card for Lord Orville. "The gentleman wishes to speak a word with his lordship."—"Show the gentleman up," said Mrs. Pluffy.—"No," said his lordship, who had turned rather pale as he looked at the card, "I will go to him. Excuse me."

He hastily left the room, throwing the card to Courtney, who, casting his eye upon it, exclaimed, "Shirley! God grant all may end well. Excuse me a moment," and off he also darted.

"How very odd!" said Miss Pluffy. "I hope it is not a challenge!"

"My dear, how absurd! Can you imagine it possible for a player to challenge a lord!" The player and the lord at that moment were seen rapidly crossing the lawn arm in arm, and in earnest conversation. They mounted their horses at the gate, and galloped off together.

Courtney returned to the drawing-room, evidently agitated.

"I come to make Orville's apologies," said he; "Shirley has brought him intelligence that requires his immediate presence at Cambridge."

"Nothing dangerous, I hope," said Mrs. Pluffy.

"I fervently hope not," said Courtney; "but I must follow him. Pray excuse my abruptness; I will come again very soon."

And so the brief visit ended; and the long, long-wished for introduction of Lord Orville had actually taken place, without a single good resulting from it, excepting that, at any rate, he could now have a card sent him for the ball.

Just as this consolatory consideration suggested itself, in came Miss Emily Eleonora, somewhat fatigued, and slightly nervous.

"Well, Emily, now how provoking it is," said her mamma; "only think, you will never guess who has been here!"

"I know, mamma," said Miss Emily, with a flutter proportioned to the occasion; "I met them in the lane."

"Them! Who do you mean? How do you know they have been here? You could only know Mr. Courtney, at any rate, not the other two," said Miss Pluffy.

"No," said Miss Emily, colouring very deeply, "but I,—that is, I—one of them was the gentleman that came over

the garden-wall." A flood of tears relieved Miss Emily's agitated bosom.

"Well, my dear, do not cry," said her mamma, encouragingly; "it was most likely Lord Orville."

"Or Mr. Shirley," said Miss Pluffy, with a somewhat disdainful toss of the head.

"It fluttered me so," said the weeping heroine.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Pluffy, "you will see his lordship again, at any rate, for he has promised to come to our ball, and we will send out the cards this very day; so take off your bonnet, and let us begin to make out the list."

Poor Emily was really tired; for what is so fatiguing as a long, sauntering stroll, without achieving the end for which it has been undertaken? and then to think that if she had stayed quietly at home she would have seen the very individual she went out to see! and still more provoking, that she would also have been seen by him to so much more advantage, for she had sense enough to know that young ladies never appear more really amiable or agreeable than at home. It certainly was very trying to her philosophy; but how many young ladies, on the look-out for husbands, run about from place to place on the continent, after having exhausted all the fashionable marriage-marts in England, and then returning to their own firesides, in all the despairing calm of anticipated celibacy, find the destined suitor quietly waiting for them, perhaps in the person of one of their nearest neighbours!

The various consultations that took place respecting who should be included and who omitted, in the invitations; who were genteel and who ungenteel; who were desirable and who undesirable—occupied the ladies so fully, that dinner-time and the doctor arrived before they had filled up a single card.

The doctor was accompanied by his son: neither of them appeared in very good humour, either with themselves or with each other. The visit of Lord Orville was, of course, the first topic introduced. The doctor lamented his bad fortune in being out of the way. Miss Emily Eleanora cast her eyes down in interesting confusion, whilst his lordship's vivacity and condescending manners formed the theme of

admiration. The projected ball then followed ; but the subject did not seem to inspire the gentlemen with the same interest that the ladies felt in the matter. Augustus was sulky, and would not say anything about it. The dinner was eaten almost in silence, and when it was concluded the doctor pulled out a bill of some length, which he handed over to Mrs. Pluffy, saying that he supposed, when she had inspected it, she would agree with him, that it ought to be paid before another of the same sort was incurred.

Augustus slightly coloured as his mother put on her spectacles, nobody being present but her own family, to look at the document. It ran as follows :—

“Augustus Myddleton Plumtree Pluffy, Esq.,—Debtor to Shortcake and Allpuff, confectioners, cooks, and fruiterers, dealers in liqueurs, &c.—

“Why, bless me, Augustus,” exclaimed Mrs. Pluffy, in dismay, dropping the bill, as she glanced her eye on the sum total, “what can you have wanted with such quantities of jellies and ices, and I don’t know what? Grapes, too, and pines ! how very foolish.”

“I think so, indeed,” said the doctor, “when he knows how much my forcing-houses are costing me.”

“Why, sir, as to that, a man must give what other men give. Lord Orville has just paid these very fellows four hundred pounds for his bill with them last term. I should not think there is a more moderate account than mine in all Trinity, for the time; and I had rather not be at college at all than sneak like a snob out of my fair share of things.”

“Yes, my dear,” argued his mother ; “but eighty pounds for three suppers and one breakfast ! why, it is impossible half the things could have been eaten.”

“Not by the men, I grant you,” said Augustus ; “but if there had been twenty times as much, the Gyps would clear it off, and that makes the rascals always send in so much more than is really wanted.”

“Well, I do think it is a shame to be so robbed,” said Miss Pluffy ; “why, eighty pounds would find Emmy and me in dresses for a twelvemonth.”

“Yes, but people must eat as well as dress, you will remember, young ladies,” said their brother ; “and as I do not comment upon your bills, I must request that you will

not on mine. It is enough that those who pay them assume the prerogative of doing so."

And so saying, with an air of offended dignity, he was about to leave the room; but the doctor was not going to let him off quite so easily—"Stay, sir!" said he, drawing forth another paper of items, headed—"Augustus Myddleton Plumtree Pluffy, Esq.,—Debtor to Mrs. Fantail, milliner, mercer, and shirt-maker"—he began:

"12 doz. French kid gloves, £14. 8s."

"Twelve dozen!" shrieked his mother,—*"impossible! It must be a mistake—it must be half a dozen. Nobody in their senses would think of getting more than half a dozen pair of gloves at a time!"*

"I am in my senses," said Augustus; "at least I consider myself so, and I always get my half-year's stock beforehand. There are only six dozen of white and six dozen of primrose; and I do not think any candid judge of such things would call that unreasonable."

Miss Pluffy lifted up her eyes, but stood too much in awe of her brother's rebuke to risk incurring it again. Mrs. Pluffy had something of the same sort of feeling, which restrained her expressions of wonder and grief; and Miss Emily was absorbed in a reverie in which we do not mean to say white gloves had no share, any more than white ribbons, but which gave her countenance a sweet placidity that was a great recommendation to her in the eyes of Augustus, under the cloudy look of his affairs at that moment.

The doctor went on—"Collars and fronts made to measurement, £10 16s."

"Well!" exclaimed Mrs. Pluffy, unable to keep silence any longer—"I do call that abominable. Why, Augustus! you can get as handsome collars as you need wish to put on for twelve shillings a dozen!"

"I dare say you may, ma'am—English make; but these are Paris; they are what the Oxford men wear—and they have always cut us out in chokers."

"They will cut *you* out in everything," said the doctor, "unless you alter your conduct. And here is another most abominable thing—fifty pounds for cigars! an expense which, when I was a young man, was unheard of."

"Very likely, sir; habits alter. Your grandfather smoked, I dare say—you did not; your son smokes—your grandson may not. Some of our men contract for their cigars at a hundred a-year, but I don't think that a good plan; only, then, to be sure, one always has plenty of prime for one's friends."

"Augustus, Augustus!" said the doctor sternly, shaking his head, "it is an idle, dirty, ungentlemanly habit; it wastes your time and your money, and spoils your breath, and vitiates your palate. A confirmed smoker cannot taste the difference between venison or mutton, port or claret, a pine-apple or a pippin."

"In short, sir, it is a matter of taste altogether, which I cannot stay to discuss at present," said Augustus, rising; "I have an engagement."

"Sit down, sir," said the doctor, authoritatively; "I wish to have a little conversation with you."

"It must be very little then, if you please, sir, just now," replied Augustus, casting an impatient look towards the door; "for I have some business of my own, of importance, to attend to."

"Not of more importance, sir, I should imagine, than that to which I desire to call your attention," said the doctor; "as it is, in fact, connected with the most important consequences to the well-doing of all your future life."

Augustus coloured, and felt rather uncomfortable: there was in his father's manner, in addition to its usual pomposity, an unusual sternness, and he began to wonder which of the many topics concerning himself, that he felt conscious were open to animadversions of anything but a pleasant nature, might be selected by him for the evening discourse. He was not kept longer in suspense than whilst the doctor swallowed a preparatory glass of wine, which done, he commenced, in much the same key as that to which he was accustomed to pitch his voice in the pulpit.

"It is respecting your future profession, Augustus, that I wish to talk to you seriously; as I am sorry to say you do not appear to take it up seriously of your own accord."

"Why, to say the truth, sir, I have not exactly made up my mind what it is to be," said Augustus, somewhat relieved by this prelude.

"You have *not*, sir!" interrupted the astonished doctor. "You have not made up *your* mind? Then, sir, give me leave to tell you that I have made up *mine*; and, therefore, I expect there will not be two opinions on the matter. What it is to be, indeed! Why, what should it be, what can it be, but the Church? What else, with your idle, expensive habits, are you fit for?"

"I do not think I am fit for that, at any rate," said the young man doggedly.

"You do not! then the more shame for you," retorted his father, "after all the expense I have been at in your education: but, however, you will give me leave to judge of your fitness. I shall not let your modesty stand in your way, I promise you."

"It is not my modesty that does, sir; I do not pretend to say that it is; because, though I do not know much, I see plenty of young men, every day, going into the Church, that do not know any more; but I have other notions connected with the subject."

"And may I ask what they are?" inquired the doctor, in a tone very like predetermined contempt for the reply, whatever it might be. Augustus felt it, and answered with some tartness,—

"In the first place, sir, if I may be allowed to bring my own personal feelings into the question, I am not particularly partial to the idea of a clerical life."

"Then, sir, you are a blockhead!" said the father.

"Thank you, sir, for the compliment!" said the son, swinging round in his chair.

"Nay, Augustus," said Mrs. Plufty, by way of keeping peace, "your father does not really mean that you are a blockhead; he only means that you must be very stupid and foolish."

"Thank you too, ma'am."

"I mean, my dear, you must be very foolish not to see your own interests better: where can you find an easier, pleasanter, genteeler way of life than in the Established Church?"

"Or a more honourable one," continued the doctor; "one that admits you into better society?"

"I know," said Augustus, more mollified by the manner

than the matter of his mother's explanation, "that it is honourable enough, if you have the luck to get a good fat living; and that it may be pleasant enough, too, in a fine sporting country, and a genteel, hospitable neighbourhood, I am very ready to grant. Still, there are some things one cannot always get over; if I could take a leap with my conscience, as easily as with my brown colt, perhaps I should not hesitate."

"Your conscience!" exclaimed the doctor, in the genuine accents of surprise.

"Conscience!" exclaimed Mrs. Pluffy, in tones of alarm.

"What has conscience to do with the matter?" continued the doctor, recovering from his first amazement.

"Ay, what, indeed?" Mrs. Pluffy chimed in; "what can you have upon your conscience?"

"Not much at present, dear mother," her son answered more gaily; "but I wish to keep it light, and I am afraid I should find the Thirty-nine Articles rather too heavy a load for it just now."

"And pray, sir, what have you, in your exceeding wisdom, got to say against the Thirty-nine Articles?" demanded the doctor, rage and disdain depicted on his countenance.

"Dear me, doctor! pray do not make yourself angry; Augustus can have nothing to say against them; he would not be so wicked, I am sure; besides running the risk of giving you a fit of the gout."

"You are right, mother. I certainly should be very sorry to give my father a fit of the gout; and I have nothing to say against the Thirty-nine Articles, which I have no doubt are very admirable things, in their way; only I should not like to take a solemn oath that I understand them all, and believe in them all."

"Dear me, how strange it is!" said Mrs. Pluffy, perplexed and ready to cry. "What a pity! why, surely anybody may believe them, that will try."

"As to understanding them," said the doctor, in a somewhat more gracious tone, anxious to clear away the stumbling-blocks which his son's unexpected discovery of a conscience threatened to lay across the path of his worldly advancement, "you would understand them, of course, exactly as

other people understand them—every one to the best of his judgment ; that is all that is expected. They are, in fact, drawn up in a truly liberal, Christian, and accommodating spirit,—at any rate, to all that are not obstinately bent upon being contumacious. You swear, in fact, that you believe they are the Thirty-nine Articles laid down by the Established Church, and that is all you have to do with them publicly ;—that is to say, your own private judgment, of course, you have a right to do what you please with. Does not King James himself say, or at least as good as say, that the very fact of the clergy signing them is proof sufficient that they are all agreed as to their general sense, and that ‘men of all sorts’ take the Articles of the Church of England to be for them—which is pretty fair evidence that they might put whatever construction they thought proper upon them. He wills, moreover, that all further curious research into them shall be laid aside, in order to avoid all disputes and differences.”

“And a very good way too,” said the admiring Mrs. Pluffy. “You see, Augustus, how clever your father is at expounding ; you need not desire to be a better clergyman than he is.”

“Perhaps not,” said Augustus, gulping down something like a tweak of conscience for saying so, “if ever I should be one at all ; but I cannot say, at present, that I feel called by the Holy Ghost, as I presume he did, and as I must swear I believe myself to be before I can be ordained.”

“That, again,” interrupted the doctor, “is one of the absurd notions that you seem to have picked up lately—I cannot conceive where, for my part. I should imagine you had got bitten by some Methodist, or Presbyterian, or some such low radical ; only I cannot conceive how you could fall into such company. Pray how do you know you are not called ? How can you know ? Are we not told that ‘the Spirit of God cometh when and where it listeth, and no man knoweth of it’ ? Does not everything happen by the providence of God ? And does not the very circumstance of your presenting yourself for ordination prove that it is the will of Providence you should be presented ? Certainly it does ; it follows, then, naturally, that you are virtually called by the—by your—that is, ——” Here the doctor felt that he was getting a little out of his depth, so he changed

his tack, and began to grow angry instead of argumentative. "But, however, sir, it is of no use wasting words upon you. You have been educated for the Church; my only means of fixing you are in the Church; and what I have said before, I say again, you have been too idle to fit yourself for anything but the Church; I am not in a situation to do anything for you. I can, indeed, scarcely keep up appearances for myself, such as my position in society demands; therefore you either go into the Church, and take your chance of living in ease and clover; or you stay out of it, and starve, like a fool."

"I do not think it follows that I need starve, like a fool," said Augustus sulkily, "merely because I do not choose to turn parson against my conscience."

"And will you vouchsafe to tell me, sir, one single thing you could do, to get your living, without hurting your conscience, which has grown so mighty tender all of a sudden?" said the doctor, throwing back his head, and staring at his son full in the face, as he had done at poor Mr. Slender, on the memorable morning of paying him his quarter's salary.

"I could go on the stage, at any rate," said the irritated Augustus Myddleton Plumtree Plufty. "If I can preach I can act, and Mr. Shirley says I have a decided talent for declamation—he was going to say, but the doctor, purple with rage, thundered out a rhyme to it, and went on, "Stage, stage! what do you mean? Would you turn mountebank? Are you in your senses? You are enough to make a bishop burn his books!"

"And you are enough to make a horse break his bridle," muttered the delinquent.

"What is that you say about horse and bridle? cannot you keep your thoughts from the stable for five minutes, whilst I am talking to you?"

"I only want the groom to bridle my horse, sir, whilst you are speaking. I shall be late for the ——"

"Nay, take yourself off, sir," said the doctor, cutting him short, and throwing himself back in his chair with an air of dignified resignation. "I do not desire either to see or hear anything more of you until you know how to behave yourself. And as for that Mr. Shirley, as you are pleased to call him, I shall send a constable after him. I will not

have a low-lived rascally itinerant, like him, go about corrupting the morals and perverting the understandings of young gentlemen whom it is the duty of every one connected with the University to guard, not only from the practice of vice, but even from the most distant approach to the appearance of it."

"Yes, to be sure," said Mrs. Pluffy; "very considerate and proper in you, doctor. You see, Augustus, how moral and respectable your father is."

"That may be; but Shirley is not a low-lived itinerant rascal," muttered Augustus, looking very much inclined to floor any one—his reverend father, of course, excepted—who should venture to say he was. "He is as much of a gentleman as I am, for anything that I can see; if he is an itinerant, it is for the fun of the thing, not for want of money: he has more than I have, I know; or at least he might have if he would only ask his father for it;—nor for want of respectable acquaintance, neither: he knows more lords than I do, and seems to be sworn friends, too, with some of them. He told me the other morning, when we were taking devilled lobster and iced champagne together, that he was to have gone into the Church himself, and that he might have a living of eight hundred a year, any day, if he altered his mind; but he did not think it honourable to take the emolument of any situation whatsoever without doing the duties of it. And I think he is right, and an excellent fellow, instead of a low-lived blackguard."

"Well, well! Augustus," said the doctor, suddenly calmed by this altered view of the case, "he may be all you think him. I did not call him blackguard, and I did not mean to hurt your feelings about him: at your age warm feelings are natural, and praiseworthy too. Did he say what living it was? perhaps he could make over his interest to you, as you are such friends; and then, surely, Augustus, you would not be so blind, so narrow-minded, as to make any more absurd scruples about the Articles, or anything else."

"O dear, no! he would not be so foolish—indeed, so wicked, I should call it;" said Mrs. Pluffy, immediately seeing the subject in the same point of view with her husband.

And Augustus, thankful to escape any further discussion

at the moment, wisely availed himself of the returning good-humour of his papa to plead his engagement with a wine-party, as an excuse for adjourning the debate ; to which the doctor made no further objection, judiciously observing to Mrs. Pluffy—

“ There is no use in reining in young people too tight ; we must give them their heads now and then. And, after all, something may come out of this Shirley ; it is astonishing what such fellows can do sometimes.”

“ I hope, indeed, there may, doctor ; and somehow or other, I think there will ; for it is very strange, but I always feel when I hear that young man’s name mentioned, as if we should have more to do with him, one day or other, than we think for.”

“ I should like to have to do with the eight hundred a year he brags of, I know ; for actually, if something or other does not drop in the way of preferment, or some godsend or other, very speedily, we must retrench ; and I declare I cannot see very clearly what we can spare.”

“ I am sure I cannot,” said Mrs. Pluffy, despondingly ; “ I am as careful as ever I can be, and so are the dear girls. To be sure, they always look fashionable, and are always in the fashion—as they ought to be ; but then, they make as little do as ever they can, of common things—and for their best they dress by contract, and they cannot do it cheaper ; for Madame Haut-ton takes all their ball dresses back again at half price, after they have been worn three times, if they do not sit down in them ; and poor Emmy is so conscientious, she will stand up a whole evening, for fear of rumpling hers ; and, indeed, Madam Haut-ton said to me herself, the very last time I paid her her bill, ‘ O Madame Pluffy, yours are such honourable young ladies ! they never sit down between the quadrilles ; I should be sure to know if they did, for I always pin a rose just here, behind ; and you see this is as fresh as if it had just come out of the case.’ There cannot be a better way, indeed, than to contract—it gives the appearance of such variety. I should never have thought of such a clever thing if Lady Cut-fine had not told me she always did so with her daughter at Paris.”

“ You are very right, my dear. Indeed, as far as you are concerned, things are always right ; and the girls too, they

are very well ; so are we all, excepting Augustus,—and even he might be worse. I cannot think where the fault can be ; but certainly, somehow or other, I do not manage to make both ends meet."

"I am sure, doctor, I cannot think what can be the reason. I do not know of any mismanagement, or waste, about the house. I look sharply enough after everything that comes into it ; and I do not see anything we can save in. To be sure, that old widow Benson, that opens the pew doors in the middle aisle, dines with the servants every Sunday ; and they have my leave all Christmas week to give hot beer to the watchman, because I was told it had always been the custom at Gormanton ; but, excepting that, and the coals and soup, one is obliged, in a manner, to give away in the winter months, for example' sake, I do not think we can be said actually to waste a single penny."

"No," said the doctor, musingly, "I do not know that we do. To be sure, we have the best of everything ; but then I have always been told, and always found, that the best is the cheapest in the end—and I am sure it is the most agreeable. To be sure, there's Mr. Slender. I have been paying him at rather a high rate—that is, considering what I might get the duty done for."

"Dear me, yes, doctor ; and considering what his expenses are, compared to ours. Why, dear me, he keeps no servant, and never has a soul come withinside his door ; and he can make a coat last him seven years ; and the girls never wear anything but their mother's things, which they vamp up again themselves ; and they all live upon the smell of a red herring, as one may say. What can they want money for ?"

"Whether they want it or not," said the doctor, who found his own conscience growing a little troublesome, at the picture his helpmate was drawing of the domestic comforts or discomforts of his spiritual coadjutor, "if I had it to give, they might have it to spend, and welcome ; but the fact is that Mr. Slender is, in reality, as rich with his habits, as I am with mine ; and as for his girls, I should not wonder if he got them off his hands before we get ours off ours."

This was a very sore point with Mrs. Plufty, but she contented herself with meekly replying,

"Very likely, my dear. There are a great many more young men fitting for his daughters than there are fitting for ours : but I do think, doctor, it is really our duty to do something effectual this winter for them. Now there is this fancy ball they seem to have set their hearts upon : if we give it soon, that is now, in the beginning of the season, we shall have a whole round of visits to pay in return, that will last us till the vacation ; and surely, among them, Augusta or Emily will do something."

"It would be very desirable, my dear, that one or both of them should manage something or other ; but as for the fancy ball, I scarcely know what to say to it : it might give offence among the evangelicals ; and really, in the present day, there is no knowing what quarter promotion may come from."

"Oh ! as for that, the evangelicals are all going out," said Mrs. Plufty eagerly—her discernment sharpening with her anxiety, "and the Puseyites are all coming in ; so I should not be surprised if we were to have dancing and plays on a Sunday in another year or two, as they have in France and Italy."

"I should not be surprised at anything, but my being made a bishop," said the doctor, in the plaintive minor key of neglected merit.

"Well, but who knows what you may be made, my dear, if only the dear girls are lucky ? If that fellow, Shirley, could have a living of eight hundred a year just for asking for, what might you not hope for, if Emmy should come to be Lady Orville ?—and there are a great many things a deal more unlikely, in my opinion."

"Why, my dear, as to that," said the doctor, who, still gazing moodily upon his son's bills, was in no hopeful frame of mind, "you thought she would have been Mrs. Courtney long before this ; and I am sure we have laid out in picnics, and water-parties, and all that sort of thing, in order to bring it about, more than enough to have bought her her wedding clothes ; but I do not see that we are one whit nearer the mark than we were when he first came to Trinity."

"Nay, now, doctor," exclaimed Mrs. Plufly, in a crying tone, "I declare it is unkind in you to say so. It was Augusta, I thought, not Emmy : indeed, nobody could say which it was ; he was so kind, first to one and then to the other ; but I do think now it is Augusta. I think he guesses, somehow, that Lord Orville is struck with Emmy ; he seemed so sorry this morning when she was out ; and I really think that if we play our cards well, we may secure them both."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL

It is good to let the first fury of a tempest subside before we begin to calculate the damage it may have done. We have all of us, thank God, passed a tranquil night, and this morning we begin to form plans for the future. Lucy has recovered her elasticity of spirits, and still dwells upon her dream of the mitre. I fear it will be accomplished on the old principle of opposites. I see now that my parishioners had heard of Doctor Plufly's intention before I did ; but one is always the last to hear of anything that concerns oneself. They say, too, that Doctor Plufly was in a hurry to give the curacy to this Mr. Snakegrass, because he is engaged to marry a distant relation of Mrs. Plufly's. It seems that the bride-elect is a governess in a family that is coming to reside near Gormanton ; and it was disagreeable to the feelings of the doctor and his lady that it should be known in the neighbourhood that they had a relation in a dependent position. The new-married couple will find it a scanty maintenance, I fear, if they bring any great notions of gentility with them.

Anxious, more, I fear, than I ought to be, about my poor girls and myself, I got one of my parishioners who was going to Cambridge this morning, to procure me the loan of a last week's "Times," in order that I might see if, by any fortunate chance, there were anything in it in our way. He brought it to me on his return from market, and, at any rate, it has afforded us amusement for the evening. Truly,

it is a goodly sheet in dimensions, and marvellously well filled up, under as many heads as the hydra-headed monster itself could boast. And then what a picture of life its advertisements afford !—curious to reflect upon—often mournful ! “Wanted”—“Wanted”—“Wanted”—it is the history of man ! But to ourselves.

The first thing that caught my eye was, “Wanted,”—not a curate, unfortunately, but “a curacy in the neighbourhood of a fashionable watering-place.” And, sure enough, it is in such places that religious instruction is often as much needed as in the mines of Cornwall or the coal-pits of Northumberland. The advertisement continues—“or in a country where game is plentiful. A foreign chaplaincy, affording good society, would not be objected to.” These concluding provisos seemed to me somewhat curious. The next advertisement, however, was for a curate ; but, alas ! in the consideration that the office would give the person who might hold it, a title to holy orders, the duty, moreover, being “quite light,” “almost nominal,” the advertiser opined that the addition of a salary would be unnecessary. So Doctor Pluffy was right enough, when he said that there were those to be found who would do the duty for nothing. There was one more advertisement for a curate, but he, it should seem, was to perform service on the Sabbath at two places, ten miles from each other—“the situation,” it was added, “might suit a gentleman fond of hunting, a pack of hounds being kept in the neighbourhood.” Neither fox-hunting, nor steeple-chasing, ever entered into my pursuits, even in my younger days, any more than tuft-hunting ; and in this case, the maintenance of my horse would, I suppose, cost me the half of my salary ; otherwise, to keep a pony would, indeed, be the very height of my ambition. But, however, it is utterly unlikely that an incumbent advertising in this manner would accept a person like myself ; so, after glancing my eye over the advertisements for the sale of advowsons, presentations, exchanges, and other matters connected with our ecclesiastical establishment, I handed the paper over to my daughters, who eagerly began looking for applications, in their way. But, alas ! here the applicants were in the proportion of a hundredfold to the places for which they offered themselves as candidates ; and then the qualifica-

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tions!—bless me! it is wonderful to think how education must have advanced during the last five-and-twenty years! There are young women engaging to teach their pupils, not only reading, writing, and arithmetic, history, chronology, geography, astronomy, and natural philosophy; but also drawing, music, singing, and dancing.

“From grave to gay—from lively to severe,”

nothing comes amiss to them. Then, as to languages, they profess themselves mistresses of French, Italian, German, sometimes Spanish, with the rudiments of Latin, if required,—as they modestly express it; and I do not doubt they could add Greek, and perhaps Hebrew, if they did not fear to appear pedantic. Why, the learned ladies of Bologna, in the fifteenth century, were nothing to them. The Admirable Crichton himself, might, if he returned to earth, find a fit mate among them; and, besides all these acquirements, they all seem favoured, by their own accounts, with remarkable sweetness of temper and obligingness of manners, and, what is still more admirable, the generality often are so humble-minded, that after setting forth all their extraordinary qualifications, they add that salary is no object, or, at any rate, only a very moderate one is required. But what is vexatious enough, is to see, on the other hand, those who are advertising for a lady of such extraordinary requirements, so far presume on this humility as to state that no salary at all will be given,—the “agreeable home” that is offered in its place being deemed recompense sufficient: as if anything but necessity would ever make any one seek a dependent home! But here, it should seem, a young person is expected to devote all her astounding attainments, and the bloom of her life, to sixteen hours per diem of labour and restraint, solely for the benefit of a stranger, who has not the generosity to reward her for it.

“You see, my dear father,” said Margaret, laying down the paper with a dejected air, “how many poor girls are as badly off as ourselves!”——“And so clever too,” said Lucy; “if I were to live to be a hundred years old, I should never know half what they do. Why only listen to this papa, and you Margaret, both of you; listen I say, and let us all ‘hide our diminished heads,’ as Mr. Shirley said, last

time he was here."—"Go on, dear Lucy, do—" said Margaret, "read away, for it is almost bed-time."—Lucy, thus admonished, elevated herself upon the footstool, and began. "GOVERNESS.—A young lady in her 21st year, the daughter of a clergyman, who is author of sermons patronized by most of the bishops, and many others of the nobility, wishes a situation as GOVERNESS, in a family. She is competent to teach the French, German, Italian, and Latin languages, with Greek as far as Xenophon and Homer; geography, use of the globes, history, arithmetic, algebra, and Euclid; the piano and harp; with the elements of drawing."—"And I declare her papa is a *rector*, too! only look, papa," and she held the paper to me to see the address, but I turned away my eyes.—"No! my child," I said; "it would only pain me to read it. A father that could give such an education as that to his daughter must be a good, and a fond father, however mistaken, as it seems to me, its aim. But we cannot know his motives, or enter into his actual position; therefore, it would be very presumptuous and wrong in us to indulge in any satirical remarks on the subject."—"I was not thinking of being satirical, dear papa," replied my coaxing Lucy, twining her ever ready arms round my neck; "but only fancy the Misses Pluffy going out for governesses."—And then Margaret and she laughingly began a comparison of their own acquirements, each trying to award the palm of superiority to the other; and I took the paper again, and was so interested in its divers matters, pertaining to this "Babel of a world," that I lost sight of all my own cares whilst contemplating, as it were, the anxieties, the misfortunes, the crimes, the accidents, the unexpected transactions which form so large a part of the *Times*, as this gigantic portraiture of the age is most fitly called. Truly, I read it till I was thankful, as I heard the rain pattering against the casement, for the blessing of a roof over my head, when I thought of the thousands of houseless wretches in London who might at that very moment, urged by want and desperation, be contemplating deeds of rapine and murder that might, alas! serve to swell the columns of the next day's paper.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HERMITAGE WITHOUT A HERMIT.

A FEW days after Lord Orville had taken such an abrupt departure from the Rectory he called again, accompanied by Clement Courtney, to make his apology. They were both of them in most excellent spirits, and it was quite evident that Mr. Shirley's errand on their preceding visit, whatever might be its purport, had not left any unpleasant impression on either of their minds: his name, however, formed no part of the theme of conversation; on the contrary, it seemed to be studiously avoided, and every trifling topic of the day was touched upon save the theatre.

A runaway match from Cambridge, which had occurred the day before, gave rise to considerable discussion.

"How very shocking!" said Miss Pluffy; "I think there is something so dreadfully indelicate in running away with a man."

"But it is the man that runs away with the lady," said Lord Orville; "and I know this, that I would not give a straw for a girl who would not let herself be run away with by me if we could not be married any other way."

And as he spoke he fixed his eyes upon Emily, with a saucy joyousness in them that crimsoned her face and neck, and made her fasten hers upon her embroidery for the next ten minutes after. Courtney looked displeased.

"You and I have different notions on that point," said he.

"Ah!" said Lord Orville, "don't be too wise. Who knows but you may do the same thing one fine summer morning?"

"Never!" said Courtney energetically, "I should never——"

"Well," interrupted Lord Orville, "I don't want to discuss differences of opinion—I feel too happy to-day to care for being contradicted."

"True, said Courtney, I should be sorry to say anything,"—he paused, and Mrs. Pluffy struck in,

"To be sure, everybody will have their opinion; Mr. Courtney is quite right; and, as your lordship says, in some cases, to be sure—that is, very particular cases——" And

here she felt that she was getting upon ticklish ground ; fortunately, her son helped her out.

"It is a fine match for the girl," said he ; "Devereux will have three or four thousand a year, and she has not a half-penny."

"I hope she will be grateful to him for it," said Mrs. Pluffy ; "but sometimes low people so forget themselves."

"Why, as to gratitude in love matters," said Courtney, "the word has no sort of business with them ; and, in my opinion, no sort of meaning. I suppose the gentleman marries the lady, or the girl, if the term be more correct, because he cannot make himself comfortable without her ; and I do not see that she owes him any particular obligation for being allowed the honour of administering to his happiness."

"Ah ! but you are always so liberal and so generous," said Mrs. Pluffy ; "there are very few like you, Mr. Courtney." And so they went on, for half-an-hour longer, arguing and complimenting : Miss Pluffy chiming in first with one and then another, and Miss Emily conversing chiefly with her eyes, which occasionally returned Lord Orville's significant glances in a manner that showed she sufficiently comprehended their language.

"Mamma," said Miss Pluffy, with somewhat of ill-humour, as soon as the gentlemen had taken their leave, and her sister had left the room, "did not you remark something very strange in Lord Orville's manner towards Emily ?"

"Why, yes—no—what do you mean, my dear ?" replied the prudent mother, for she had not quite made up her mind whether it might be altogether advisable to admit her eldest daughter into the secret of all her speculations concerning her youngest.

"Mean !" reiterated Miss Pluffy, "lor, mamma !—why, I mean that it was very strange that Lord Orville should ask Emily, the very first time he saw her, how her cold was. How could he know that she had got a cold ? And then she called his little dog Nap, too ; how could she know what his name was ?"

"It was rather strange, to be sure," said Mrs. Pluffy. "I must say I thought the little dog wagged his tail at her very oddly."

"Oddly, indeed!" said Miss Pluffy, in a tone of pique; "I think it is all very odd. I wonder you do not talk to her about her long walks—and always by herself, too; she never asks me to go with her now."

"Why, you know, my dear, you never were so fond of walking as Emily is; and then, you know, she visits the poor more than you do."

"I dare say I give them quite as much as she does, in the course of the year, though I may not always be poking my nose into their cottages, to see what they are about. I know very well they always wish me far enough, whatever they may pretend."

"Nay, I do not think they wish Emily far enough, she is so very sweet to them—not but what you are just as good, my dear, indeed, nobody can be better; but, you know, you have a more dignified way with you—you are more like me; but as to being as amiable as Emily, that you certainly are, in every respect; and as I was saying to Mr. Muggins the other day, you would do credit to the first nobleman in the land. At the same time, you are so prudent and clever, you would be both a comfort and a treasure to any worthy man in business."

Miss Pluffy turned the colour of pickled cabbage.

"I wish, mamma, you would not talk to Mr. Muggins about me."

"And why not, my dear? Mr. Muggins is a very excellent man, and very well off in the world, too; and you know, Augusta, your poor papa, if it should please Heaven to take him, which it no doubt will one day or other, has not a penny to leave behind him; and, indeed, if he does not get some little preferment soon, I do not know how he will manage to get on. If he had had his deserts he would have been a bishop before now."

"I am sure I wish he had," sighed Miss Pluffy; "but, however, it never answers to seem too anxious, that I know. And I am sure Emily running about, as she does, to try if she can meet Lord Orville, is not very likely to make us appear respectable in Mr. Muggins's eyes, or anybody's else. I think you ought to talk to her about it, if only for my sake."

"Why, my dear, as to that, you know, Emily has a very

delicate mind, and I should not like to hurt her feelings by seeming to doubt her prudence, which, in fact, I do not, for I have the highest confidence in it, on the contrary."

Miss Pluffy saw that her mamma had some scheme at work, with which any lecturing of her sister would have been incompatible; she therefore turned to her piano, not in a very good humour with it, any more than with her sister, or her mamma either, saying, in an under-tone, "I don't think Lord Orville very likely, from all that we see or hear of him, to be a marrying man."

"Who was saying anything about Lord Orville?" said Mrs. Pluffy, sharply; "I think *you* are very odd, Augusta, this morning. But, no matter; I have no time for any more such foolish conversation. I must look after the game, and see what ought to be dressed to-day." So saying, she left her daughter to her own reflections.

Appended to the garden of the Rectory was a sort of half orchard, half shrubbery, not much attended to in either point of view; for the doctor took more delight in his wall-fruit and hot-house productions than in his apples and pears, which, moreover, had no very fine flavour to recommend them; and the shrubs were scrubby and neglected, because, as they were out of sight of the house, the gardener, not finding his wages very regularly paid, grudged the time required to keep them in better order. There was a thatched shed at the extremity, that was originally intended for the reception of tools; but, having long ceased to be used for that purpose, Miss Emily Eleanora, one dull autumnal morning, just after reading Goldsmith's "Edwin and Angelina," resolved to convert it into a hermitage. Accordingly, she caused the gardener, somewhat against his inclination, to leave the bread and cheese and ale with which he invariably and scrupulously marked the "noon-tide hour," in order to sweep up the fallen leaves from the deserted paths, and strew them on the floor of the cell, as she called the aforesaid shed, or tool-house, to form of them an appropriate carpet for the "pilgrim feet" of the chosen few that Miss Emily meant to guide to her recess. She next hung up a frail-basket and a lackered jug on one side of the wall, on the other a paste-board crucifix; under it a little deal table flanked a couple of wooden chairs, stolen from the kitchen, and decorated

with a pair of shank-bones of mutton, carefully scrubbed and placed crossways, and surmounted with a calf's skull, the cartilaginous appurtenances of which had figured in a tureen of mock-turtle soup the day before. The next achievement was to purchase an hour-glass from a jew pedlar, and place it on the table with Hervey's "Meditations," Blair's "Grave," Young's "Night Thoughts," and Mrs. Rowe's "Letters from the Dead to the Living." Her own peculiar studies, however, in this her private retreat, were generally procured from the Circulating Library at Cambridge, and were of a somewhat less lugubrious character than the works she thought proper to assign to her imaginary hermit,—for imaginary he was destined to be, her mamma having made a protest against her introducing, to enact the part of one on days when company was expected, an old mendicant,—

"Whose beard, descending, swept his aged breast,"

but whose appearance was more venerable than his reputation, inasmuch as he had been frequently placed in the stocks in the market-place, for drunkenness, and had been more than once convicted of walking off from houses, where he had received charity, with whatever trifling articles might come in his way, through absence of mind, as he used to say, which, however, increased upon him so much as to make his personal absence much more desirable than his presence.

Nevertheless, the Hermitage, such as it was, had its uses. In the first place, it was a very quiet nook for Miss Emily to read novels and write poetry in; and in the next, it served as an admirable excuse for a *tête-à-tête* with visitors of the male sex who might either be suspected of having any secret communication to make, or deemed capable of being inspired with tender thoughts by the combination of solitude and soft words. Many had been the gay Cantabs that had been subjected to the trial of its effects: inasmuch as that "Will you look at the Hermitage?" became a cant phrase among them, when they wished to rally each other upon the possible results of a flirtation.

Clement Courtney had had his full share of invitation to it, first from one sister, then another, and not unfrequently from the mamma herself; but, "nothing came of it," as the baillie says in his "Annals of the Parish," though Mrs.

Pluffy was so considerate on all these occasions that it was her constant care to guard the parties from interruption.

"Do not, my dear Augusta, go to that side of the garden just now, your sister is in the Hermitage."—"Do not, my dear Emily, take your book to the Hermitage just now, your sister Augusta is there." And, indeed, the Hermitage, to do it justice, had been successful in one instance, for it was within its still, or rather chill retreat, that the worthy Mr. Muggins had first found courage to declare to Miss Pluffy that "*heaven an ermit* might be very appy with such a hamiable young lady for a companion," though he felt, all the time that he was speaking, that the temperature of his own brewery was much more congenial to the tender passion.

Now, Mrs. Pluffy had remarked that for some days in succession Emily had gone out at the front door, warmly wrapped up, apparently for a long walk, but had quickly and furtively returned, through the court-yard into the garden, notwithstanding the unseasonableness of the season, and entrenched in the Hermitage, turning the key of the shrubbery-gate withinside. The wary mother quickly surmised that it was not to muse *alone* her daughter thus betook herself to solitude and secresy; she therefore, one morning, walked quietly into the rugged and narrow lane that ran behind the garden and orchard, in order that she might make her own observations. Arrived exactly opposite the lath and plaster edifice yclept the Hermitage, she saw a light ladder, which she instantly recognized as pertaining to the premises, being used for gathering fruit, placed in a very suspicious position against the wall; it exhibited marks of foot-steps, still wet—for the lane, was what, in Yorkshire language, is expressively termed *clarty*, and the soil-way clayey, adhering somewhat pertinaciously to the soles of the few pedestrians that sought a short cut from one high-road to another.

Mrs. Pluffy felt astounded and bewildered. It was evident that her daughter had a visitor, and an expected one, for she herself must have aided his entrance by lowering the ladder to him from her side of the wall. Mrs. Pluffy's first idea was to mount the ladder herself, step over the wall, surprise the intruder, and demand an explanation from him,

provided he should prove to be worth *fixing*—as our worthy friends on the other side of the Atlantic term the nailing down a greenhorn in contract. Accordingly, she hitched aside her redundant silk dress, threw up her veil, to discern her way more clearly, and began her ascent. But she was stout, and the ladder was slight—it began to shake, and so did she. Like Fatima, in “Blue Beard,” she was ready to say, if not to sing,—

“Oh ! I fear my foot will slip,”

and to think it would be better to come

“Pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, down the step.”

Previously, however, to descending, she thought she would, at any rate, make the best use she could of her ears, if not of her eyes ; so, steadying herself by grasping the edge of the wall, to the great damage of her primrose-coloured gloves, she listened with all her might, in the tantalizing position of her nose being within two inches of the summit of the wall, and not half an inch from the side of it. She soon distinguished the voice of Emily in its most sentimental tones, and responded to by another of masculine depth. She could make out but little of the dialogue, for the wind blew her veil about, and the leaves rustled, and the ladder creaked ; but she heard Emily say in a die-away tone—“All the titles in the world could not add one iota to my love !” Some rapturous exclamations followed from the object thus addressed, but just as Mrs. Pluffy’s curiosity was wound up to agony-pitch, she was suddenly jerked by her petticoat. Forgetting her ticklish position, she hastily turned round, and she would have come along with it to the ground, had she not been saved by falling into the arms of blacksmith Jem, who happened to be passing by at the instant.

“Don’t be afeard, mistress,” said he, very civilly, placing her on her feet, whilst a little dog, who had been the cause of her mishap by pulling at her petticoat, frolicked around him ; “he’ll do you no harm ! he often comes to my dame’s with his master and another young chap ; he plays with the childer. He knows me, too, by this time—Nap, Nap, come here, old feller ;—he’s full of play.”

“Tiresome little wretch,” Mrs. Pluffy had begun ; but a

glance at the collar with the name of Orville upon it changed her tone. "Naughty little fellow," patting him on the head, "how could you frighten me so?"

"His master's not far off, I'll be bound for it," said Jem. "A sly young fellow, he is," and Jem pursed up his mouth, and gave Mrs. Pluffy a knowing look, between a goggle and a grin, that brought all the colour into her goodly face. "Do you please, ma'am, to want to get up the ladder again?" said Jem, raising it as he spoke.

"No," said Mrs. Pluffy, hastily, and looking rather foolish, "let it lie there; or, stay, leave it against the wall, the gardener will be coming by."

Jem pulled his forelock, as an apology for not touching his hat, which he had not upon his head to touch, and pursued his way, glad to escape further notice, as he had under his apron a brace of hares, which he had had the good luck to kill, *by accident*, that morning, and of which the secreting gave him somewhat of a dropsical appearance. So he took one path and Mrs. Pluffy another, for Nap pertinaciously continued his barking, and she had only just time to turn round an angle in the lane when she heard a voice from the garden call out, "Be quiet, sir; lie down, Nap." A minute after, a light step bounded into the lane, and Nap frisked after a young man who gaily carolled, as he went along, "The Birks of Aberfeldy," beating the bushes on either side of him.

Mrs. Pluffy rejoiced that the unknown, whoever he might be, had taken a direction opposite to her own, and hastening home, found Emily seated in the window, working with as much composure as if nothing had happened, only that her fingers were somewhat blue, and her nose a little red.

From that moment Mrs. Pluffy set it down as a settled thing that her daughter was destined to be Lady Orville, and piously resolved that no premature inquiries, or unnecessary intervention, of hers should interfere with the designs of Providence.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

NEVER have I passed so anxious, so mournful a Christmas-eve and Christmas-day morning! This blessed season, when the providence of Him who disposeth the hearts of men calls forth the benevolence of the rich, so that even the poorest are enabled, in some degree, to rejoice, found us almost destitute of necessities. Christmas-eve, too, is Margaret's birthday—she is now eighteen,—but alas! we could not celebrate it by the smallest gratification. We sanctified it, however, by reading and prayer, and went to our beds in a peaceful, if not cheerful, frame of mind.

This morning I performed the service of the day at my own church, and, immediately after, I went to Sutton-Longfield, four miles off, to officiate for my brother curate there, who is now lying on a bed of sickness. It snowed heavily all the way, and a sharp easterly wind drove the sleet full in my face, insomuch that, blinded and bewildered, I could scarcely keep my feet. I feel the approaches of old age rapidly within these few months—my strength decreases, I am sensible it does. To be sure, a diet chiefly of cabbages and potatoes, with rarely anything but toast-and-water to drink, is not calculated, at my time of life, to keep it up. Yet my poor brother labourer in the Lord's vineyard, though his curacy is worth twice as much as mine, would, I doubt not, think himself well off to be even as I am, could he be as well in bodily health.

I was much exhausted when I got into the pulpit, but I seemed to gain energy as I proceeded in my discourse. I had taken for my text the blessed words,—

“Glory unto God in the highest, on earth peace, and goodwill towards men.” Who, indeed, could speak on such a theme and not feel his heart glow within him with holy fervour and grateful love? I then went to farmer Hurst's, to baptize the infant of a lady whose husband has taken lodgings there. I read the service at her bedside, but I did not see her; I heard her sobs though, poor thing, as she made the responses. Mrs. Hurst says she is young and

very delicate, and suffered so severely that the good woman had great fears that both the mother and infant might be lost.

The worthy farmer pressed me to dine with him after the ceremony. These honest country folks are more hospitable at Sutton-Longfield than they are at Greykedale, where for more than two years not a single one of my parishioners has ever thought of inviting me to a meal. What plenty, too, these good people live in! How comfortable their large wainscoted old-fashioned parlour looked; decked out with holly, and a huge Christmas log blazing on the fire; how inviting their neatly-spread and well-covered table! but I thought of my poor girls dining on tea and dry bread, and my heart seemed to rise to my mouth. Ah! if I could only have seen them at my side. I longed for the fragments of the feast to take home to them. At last, I got courage to say, when the farmer's wife pressed me, at tea, to eat, that instead of taking anything more myself, I would, with her good leave, put a slice of her Christmas cake into my pocket for my daughters. The good woman was delighted that I had mentioned them; she instantly went out of the room, and returned in about ten minutes, with a basket covered with a white cloth, which she lifted up, and showed me beneath it a good-sized cake, half a dozen mince-pies, and a cold fowl, garnished with curled parsley and slices from a fine ham of her own curing, which we had had at dinner,—saying she hoped I would excuse her for popping the things in with the cake, as she thought, perhaps, I should be able to relish a mouthful at supper, for she was sure I had made a very poor dinner. She little knows how I have been in the habit of dining lately.

One kindness inspires another—the farmer would send me home in his roomy single-horse chaise, which, as the snow still continued, was very acceptable; moreover, it brought me back so much sooner to my girls, and I was impatient to see the dainties I brought with me spread out before them.

I found our young friend—for so I like to call and think him—Mr. Shirley with them. It was a holiday with him, he said, and by way of enjoying it he had taken the liberty to come to us, as an opportunity had presented itself for conveying him to Greykedale, for two or three hours, and

back to Cambridge. I was very glad to see him. My poor girls' countenances brightened, when they found there was something to invite him to partake of ; and, moreover, at the bottom of the basket was a bottle of excellent old port—half of which I put aside for poor Molly Simpson, who is a trifle better, and may, perhaps, still be spared to her children.

Mrs. Hurst was right enough—I certainly enjoyed my supper more than I had done my dinner, it was such a pleasure to me to see my dear girls enjoy it with me ; the young man's presence likewise gave it an additional relish. There is something so exhilarating in seeing a friend at one's own table. He, too, was in such excellent spirits that he enlivened us all ; and looked so happy that it did my heart good to look at him. Margaret and Lucy not only enjoyed his sallies, but returned them. I never saw them more cheerful. Thus, a day begun in sorrow ended in joy. As for me, I felt quite comfortable, and full of hope that as my days may be so shall be my strength.

It is mortifying to think how dependent we are upon material things ; but it cannot be denied that the body has great influence upon the mind—when the building is out of repair the tenant is ill at ease. The lamp, to burn clearly, must be supplied with oil. I said many excellent things to Farmer Hurst, upon fortitude in adversity and moderation in prosperity. I took occasion also not to let the evening pass entirely away without profit to Mr. Shirley, by a word in season. At present I am so wearied I must go to bed ; but I do so in a sweet and blessed frame of mind.

“The Lord is my strength and my shield.

“My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped : therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth in Him, and with my song will I praise Him.”

DEC. 31st.—The year is closed. I thank the Lord that, with the exception of a few storms, it has been to me rich in mercies and consolations.

It is true that at times we have scarcely had wherewithal to satisfy our hunger, nevertheless we have been sustained and nourished. Well has our divine Master said, “Man shall not live by bread alone ;” He had bread to eat which His disciples knew not of ; and with some crumbs of this

soul-supporting sustenance has He been mercifully pleased to refresh my drooping spirits, and to spread a table for me in the wilderness.

True, the bitterest inquietudes have, at times, intruded themselves on my mind, in consequence of my destitute and uncertain state ; but these very inquietudes have also given birth to my sweetest consolations. I have, at this moment, scarcely sustenance for my daughters and myself for the next three months ; but how many have not even half as much ! How many, nay thousands, when they rise in the morning, know not where they are to lay down their heads at night !

True I have not lost my place. I may, in my old age, be deprived of my sacred employment, and with it of the means of existence. It is possible that I may be condemned to pass the year now opening upon me within the walls of a prison, separated from my dear daughters—but Margaret is right, God will be with me there, as well as in any other place. A pure mind remains pure, even in the lowest depths of misery ; and a guilty soul would be incapable of happiness even in the highest heaven. Yes, I am contented—I am thankful.

He who can bound his desires in narrow compass is happy.

A good conscience is better than worldly dignities.

He only who can look upon what the world calls honours and happiness with indifference is worthy of them.

He who can renounce this world lays up for himself a blessed heritage in the next.

I comprehend more and more the spirit of the Sacred Word every day since I have studied it in the school of adversity. The dignitaries of Oxford and Cambridge may comment on the text, but it is the heart that teaches the spirit.

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes.

“I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou, in faithfulness, hast afflicted me.

“Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors. Consider how I love Thy precepts ; quicken me, O Lord, according to Thy lovingkindness.”

With these reflections I this day finish my journal for the year. I am delighted to think that I have persevered, for some years past, in continuing it. Well would it be for every one to keep such a register of his thoughts, his actions, his occupations, and the circumstances that happen to him.

"Lord, teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom."

One learns more in observing one's self than in studying the most elaborate treatises on human nature that ever were written by schoolmen or philosophers. In putting down, every day, upon paper, not only our actions, but our motives, our very inmost thoughts and most secret sentiments, we draw from nature; and at the end of the year we may contemplate our own features under every variety of light and shade. Indeed, I believe this fidelity of resemblance is the cause of the objection many feel to keeping a journal—they have not the courage to look themselves full in the face as they are; and they feel self-convicted of duplicity if they endeavour to represent themselves as they are not. Alas! we are so habitually intent on deceiving others, that we end by deceiving even ourselves. We forget that we cannot deceive Him who "looketh on the heart," and "from whom no secret is hid."

Man, moreover, is never twice alike—in the whole course of his existence, he never is again exactly what he was the moment before. He who says he knows himself, is only right whilst he is saying so—for then he feels as he says! few know what they were yesterday, still fewer know what they will be to-morrow.

A journal is also useful in that by it we learn to acquire greater confidence in our blessed Lord and Saviour, and firmer reliance on His kind providence. We see by it how often we have disquieted ourselves with the apprehension of evils which after all may never have befallen us! how often we have indulged in vain hopes and ambitious speculations which, if they have apparently been realized, have peradventure brought with them none of the happiness that we had anticipated as their result. It is likewise a wholesome practice to trace back whatever good we may enjoy to something that, at the time, might appear a great trial to us, and

yet actually, in the consequences connected with it, may have been indirectly, under the Divine Providence, the cause of the very good on which we are felicitating ourselves. We are all ready enough to complain of our disappointments, but we never take note of the disappointments on the other side of the question—if we were as free to acknowledge unexpected good as to murmur at an unexpected evil, if we may speak of any of the dispensations of the Divine Providence by such an epithet, we should maintain a more equal temperature of mind. The whole hundred and seventy-five volumes of the “Universal History,” would not instruct us so much on this subject as the history of the thoughts, feelings, and projects of the humblest individual, impartially narrated by himself, for a single twelvemonth.

I have also this year experienced the truth of two very homely proverbs—“Misfortunes never come single,” and “When things are at their worst they mend.”

All misfortunes appear more formidable at a distance than when we actually come to grapple with them; “for nothing is so dreadful as it seems.” The clouds that are the precursors of a storm do not appear so black to us when they hang immediately over our heads as when we see them rising up at the edge of the horizon. It is better to know the worst than to dread the worst.

I have, moreover, laid it down as a rule to myself, in all untoward events, to consider immediately what may be the utmost harm that can happen to me from them—thus, without further preamble, I make up my mind to the worst; and it is rarely, indeed, that matters do come to the very worst, so all that falls short of it appears something gained.

Sufficient for me if I can pursue my pilgrimage on ground not too rough for my strength, though it may afford little to delight my fancy on the road; still, every step brings me the same nearer to the end of my journey. What, then, have I to do but implore the Lord to guide me on my way, to be “a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,” to let “His rod and His staff support and comfort me,” and, finally, to open to me the mansions of eternal rest, out of His infinite love and mercy? Amen.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

JANUARY 1ST.—Our year has begun with a most singular circumstance. This morning, as I was lying in bed, reflecting upon the sermon I intended to give on the opening of another year, I heard a knock at the door. It was only six o'clock, but Lucy was already down stairs; her sister complained of head-ache, and she, therefore, would not let her get up. Thinking it might be some sick parishioner who had sent for me thus early, she ran to the door. The same idea struck me, and I instantly arose and began to dress myself. The stars were still shining, and by their feeble light she saw a man with a large box under his arm. He asked to put it down himself, saying, it required care. He accordingly set it on the table, in the kitchen, where Lucy had just lighted the fire, and merely saying, "It is for Mr. Slender—please to keep it this side up," he instantly went away, without asking for anything for his trouble. Lucy flew up stairs, and tapping softly at my door, asked me if I was awake. Upon my telling her to come in, she entered, and wishing me a happy new year, she added, laughing, with her arms round my neck, "And what do you think it begins with, papa? With the bishop's cap I dreamt of! At any rate, there is a box come for you, quite big enough to hold it; and I am quite sure it is a new-year's gift." I had heard the rumbling of wheels in the lane, as of a tax-cart, or some light vehicle, and I immediately thought of my friend, Farmer Hurst; indeed, I know no other person who would have thought of me at this season. I was sorry Lucy had not asked the man to stop and rest himself, as I would have given him a trifle; but she, in her wonder, never thought of it. Whilst she went to call her sister, and light the lamp, I finished dressing myself. I must confess I felt as much curiosity as my girls could possibly do. For the curate of Creykedale to have a new-year's gift was quite an event in the "annals of the parish." I saw I had won the farmer's heart when I dined with him. I fancied his good wife had been kind enough to surprise us with some cakes; and I admired her attention in sending them before daybreak, that

we might have them in time for breakfast. When I went down stairs I found Margaret and Lucy standing at the table, examining the direction of the box, which was "To the Reverend Thomas Slender, to be opened immediately, and with care—this side uppermost." It was much larger than I expected. "It is a goose pie," thought I to myself; but I said nothing. There were two round holes in the lid of the box, but we could only see something white through them. I opened it very carefully, and very easily, for I found it was not nailed, only tied with packthread. The first thing we saw was a fine cambric handkerchief. We raised it. The same exclamation broke from all our lips at the same moment: "Good Heaven! a baby!" Margaret burst into tears. The poor girl was overwhelmed with the novelty of her astonishment. A little infant, not more than a few days old, was laid in the box, on linen as white as snow. Its head rested on a pillow of white satin, tied with knots of rose-coloured ribbon. It was covered with a little counterpane, curiously stitched, and trimmed with fine lace—Valenciennes, my girls called it; they knew it, they said, because it was like some they had of their dear mother's. We all looked at each other in amazement, and could not utter a single word. Lucy was the first to break the silence of consternation. She looked alternately at us and the baby, and then, bursting into a loud laugh, she exclaimed, "Here's a new-year's gift for us! What can we do with it? We had better have had the bishop's mitre." Margaret bent her head over the little sleeper, and tenderly kissed its cheek. "Poor little darling!" said she, and her voice melted as she spoke; "has it no mother?—or perhaps she dares not acknowledge it as her child. To think that so helpless, so innocent, a little being should be abandoned to chance in such a way! But it is not chance, my dear father. Is it not as the Psalmist says, 'When my father and mother forsake me, thou, Lord, wilt take me up?' Look, look, father! look Lucy, how calmly and securely it sleeps, as if it knew it was under the shadow of the Almighty's wings."

"Poor, forsaken little one!" I could not help exclaiming. "May thy sleep always be as tranquil, and as innocent! Most likely thy parents are too high in rank to care for thee—too much occupied with worldly pleasures to think of thee."

They have done well to send thee to the house of mourning ; it is better for thee, perhaps, than the house of mirth."

"I will be its mother," said Margaret ; and as she spoke, the tears fell afresh down her cheeks : never had I seen her so carried away by her feelings. She has, in general, such command over them ; is so silent when anything affects her ; I pressed her to my heart,—“Be its mother,” I said ; “the child rejected by fortune belongs to those who are accustomed to her frowns. The Lord is willing to try our faith—no, he does not try it, he knows it already. It is only to exercise it, that this little creature is thus mysteriously sent to us. We, ourselves, indeed, do not know how we shall live from day to day, but the Lord knows it, and He gives us this child to provide for.”

“Oh, it will want so little,” exclaimed Lucy ; “I will take no milk in my tea, and what I save will be enough for the baby.” This sally made us all cheerful, and it was carried *nem. con.* that we were to adopt the baby, and to go without milk, if needful so to do, for its comfort,—I to be the guardian, Margaret the nursing mother, and Lucy the honorary nurse ; for Margaret was unwilling that the offices of mother and nurse should be separated for one moment, unless in case of necessity.

“I suppose I may have the honour of getting the breakfast ready,” said Lucy ; and as the little stranger continued fast asleep, we thought we could not do better than sit down to table—though we had only dry toast instead of Farmer Hurst’s cakes, or the goose-pie which had for a moment flattered my imagination. We relished our meal nevertheless, with a thousand conjectures as to the parents of our unexpected little guest ; it was evident they must know us, though we did not know them, as the box was directed to me so particularly by my Christian name. Lucy could tell us nothing more than what she had told us already. The baby, meanwhile, continued to sleep, and I looked over my sermon ; the text of which was, appropriately enough, “Who shall know what a day may bring forth ?” While my daughters hastened to make arrangements for their little charge, Lucy frolicked round it like a child with a new doll ; but Margaret seemed already impressed with a sense of the duties she had taken upon herself, and went about with

a noiseless step, and an expression of tender seriousness in her countenance, that had something very beautiful and saintly in it ; at least in the eyes of her father, who perhaps, set his heart too much upon the precious gift Heaven has bestowed upon him in her. I must confess, too, though some might chide the feeling as savouring of superstition, or even of presumption, that I could not help considering this infant, arriving at such a period, in so unusual a manner, as a sort of guardian angel, sent as the means, by some unknown channel, of communicating help to me in my distress. I seemed, instead of finding my cares increased by it, as if I was relieved of a great part of them. I breathed more freely, and indescribable sentiments of happiness and hope seemed to diffuse themselves over my mind. It was as if we were indeed brought, by this innocent babe, within the immediate sphere of those angels who, in heaven, "do always see the face of their Father which is in heaven." How gladly do I go forth in such a spirit to serve at the altar of my God!

"I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth, yea, I will praise him among the multitude.

"For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul."

"Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord : O Lord, I beseech thee, now send prosperity.

"Thou art my God, and I will praise thee : thou art my God, and I will exalt thee."

EVENING.—I returned home late, and somewhat fatigued with my sacred avocations. I think, two-thirds of the parish came to the Lord's table, this day ; and truly rejoiced was I to distribute to them the blessed bread of life eternal. After the service was finished, I went to Markfield, three miles off, to pray with the wife of a poor labourer, who, I fear, lies on the bed of death ; five children were weeping round her—the eldest not ten years old ; the poor father, looked in an amazement of grief—yet the grace was given him to say, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Verily with such a spirit, he will not lack consolation. I prayed for it to be given to

him, and the poor woman smiled, as if she felt that the prayer would be heard. Great poverty is added to their affliction; they had nothing in the house but a little bread, and a few potatoes: fortunately, I had about me the money collected in the morning for the poor, and I gladdened them for the moment, by dedicating a part of it to their necessities. These are trying scenes, but it is wonderful how the afflictions of the poor are softened to them by the resignation with which they bear them. "It is the Lord's will, and He can get us through everything, if we look to Him." Such is the simple summing up of their faith, and ah! how much happier for them than all the systems that were ever framed, all the creeds that were ever professed!

It was almost dark when I got back: the road lay over ploughed lands, and missing continually the path, which was indeed obscure in the snow, it was very fatiguing; the cold, too, was piercing, and it is now four years since I have had the luxury of a great coat. The last I had was stolen, along with my hat, which luckily was an old one, by a person who came to ask charity, and whom I had left alone in the passage whilst I wrote him a recommendation to the squire's lady. But these little trials of the outward man were forgotten the moment I saw the light gleaming in the window of my own happy home. The dear girls must have heard, or rather *felt* my footsteps, the snow being too deep for them to sound; for the door was opened to me by Lucy, just as I got upon the steps. She led me into the parlour. How cheerful it looked! An excellent fire was blazing in the grate, my armchair was drawn close to it, my slippers within the fender; the cloth was laid, not with more neatness than usual, but with more pretention, for wine-glasses were placed upon it, and I then observed a bottle of wine standing within the fender. Lucy told me it was a present from Mr. and Mrs. Greensides. Miss Nancy had brought it herself, with their respects—which was very civil in them. The butcher also had sent a fine piece of sirloin of beef, as a new-year's gift; and Margaret, having kept her present of raisins from Mr. Allspice untouched, had added a plum-pudding to it; so that, with the potatoes and greens out of our own garden, and a nice little plate of horse-radish—like ivory shavings—which Lucy had garnished with variegated endive,

we sate down to a meal which an epicure might have looked at with appetite. These dear girls! what credit would they do to establishments equal to their deserts! But nothing gave me so much pleasure, as to see Margaret, in her pretty brown silk dress, and with the baby in her arms. She smiled most importantly; and we all perceived the infant smiled too, as I patted its soft cheek. As soon as we had dined, for Lucy insisted on our doing nothing before, they made me look at all the fine things they had found in the box—the glass bottle, for the babe to draw from it the substitute for its mother's milk; the caps, the robes, the linen, the silver spoon and skillet, and, after all, a little parcel sealed and directed to me, which Margaret discovered at the feet of the baby when she took it up, on its waking. Curious to learn something of the origin of my little unknown, and most unexpected guest, I opened the packet and found a *rouleau* of twenty guineas, with a letter which I here copy,—

“Relying on your piety and philanthropy, the parents of this dear infant intrust it to your care for a time; do not turn away from it; you will one day, when they are able to make themselves known to you, find that they are not ungrateful. The darling is already baptized; its name is Henry. The accompanying rouleau you will perhaps deem sufficient for the cost it may put you to, during the first three months; every quarter the same sum will be remitted to you in advance. Take, then, the babe under your protection; and, above all, its parents recommend it to the care of your amiable Margaret.”

Lucy on hearing this letter, and seeing the money, jumped for joy. “This is the bishop’s cap, indeed,” she exclaimed, “how rich we shall be! we need not care about the curacy now; but, however, it is rather hard upon me that there should be no mention of the amiable Lucy;” and then she ran to kiss the baby, and we again and again read the letter, and counted the money, and spread it upon the table, and could scarcely believe our eyes as we looked at it. What a new-year’s gift for me! In an instant I saw myself relieved from all my anxieties for the future; but by what unlooked-for and most extraordinary means! How often have I remarked, in the course of my life, that the sources which appear the most probable, and to which we look with most confidence, utterly fail us; whilst, on the other hand, others of which we had no knowledge, and could not even have imagined, are opened to us: so true it is that the tender

mercy of the Lord leads us by ways we know not, and teaches us to rely upon Him, by the daily, hourly proofs He gives us of His guiding care and over-ruling love.

In vain I passed in review everybody that I had ever known, to discover among them a single person, whose rank, or peculiar position, might oblige them to conceal the birth of a child, or who might have recourse to such a pretext for doing an act of charity, without fear of humbling my pride—for, alas! we all have our pride—yet no one would part with an infant merely to make it the instrument of serving another. I considered and reconsidered and came no nearer to a conclusion; but that the parents know me and mine, though I know not them, is evident. Nevertheless an idea comes over me as I write, but I shall not mention it, lest I should do any one an injustice; still I cannot help thinking of the poor young lady at good Mr. Hurst's. No doubt the matter will be cleared up, and that which is secret shall be brought to light, in the Lord's good time—the ways of Providence are, indeed, admirable and inscrutable.

“Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

CHAPTER XXX.

NEW ARRANGEMENTS.

It may easily be imagined that the unexpected event which our good curate has narrated in the last pages of his journal, occasioned a most unwonted bustle in his little household. The next day, when he came in to dinner, after having gone the accustomed round of his parochial duties, he found Margaret with her new charge asleep in her lap.

“Will you, my dear father,” said she, “think me very extravagant or unreasonable in a proposal I am going to make?”

“I will answer for it I shall not, my child, seeing that I have never yet known you to propose anything savouring of either one or the other?”

“Perhaps because hitherto we have never had the means of carrying out anything that might appear so; but now

that we are rich—only think, dear father, twenty guineas beforehand, and the prospect of as much more at the end of three months, from whomever this dear babe”—and here she pressed its velvet cheek, and folded hands, and little pursed-up mouth to her lips—“may belong to; I do not think it likely that they will reclaim him before six months are over. Well, then, what I have to say is this: during all the time that the darling does stay with us, he will form my entire occupation. He requires the care of one person, and that person must be myself. I could not let anybody take my place. I have not had him out of my arms since you went away. But then I should not like to see dear Lucy have all the work of the house to do, without my being able to assist her. I thought, therefore, that if we had a girl to help her, Lucy would have more time for her needle, and her reading, and we should be together as much as before.”

“You are very right, my Margaret; it will gladden my heart to see you both comfortable. Moreover, this dear little stranger, who gives us the means of adding to our own comforts, has a right to have some portion of them devoted peculiarly, as we may say, to himself; therefore, my dear, make what engagements you think proper.”

“Well, then, dear father, I will, if you please, take Rose Arnold out of the school. For the present, I think, we may venture to pay here eighteen pence a week, which will be a great help to her poor mother, and we can teach her many things that will be useful to her afterwards; and then I shall always be at liberty to attend to the baby, and Lucy will have time to look after such little matters as before fell to my share.”

Accordingly, that very day Rose Arnold was installed into the dignity of maid-of-all-work at the parsonage, and we greatly doubt whether the office of mistress of the robes to her Majesty ever gave the charming lady that holds it one half so much importance, in her own opinion.

“How droll it seems for us to ring the bell, and have somebody come in and wait upon us,” said Lucy, as she knelt by her sister’s side, watching the important operation of feeding the baby. “It makes me feel quite like a fine lady; and you, my darling Margaret, you look like one, too, in your nice brown silk, and that pretty collar and pink satin bow. How

glad I am you got it! You little thought, Margaret, when you were making it up, and said you would not wear it till Christmas-day—what a day it would be to us all!”

“No, indeed, Lucy; we should have been strangely impatient if we had known what a surprising turn your dream was to take.”

“How astonished Mr. Shirley will be, when he comes! He will be sure to call to-day to wish us a happy new year—you know he said he would. I am so glad! Do you know, Margaret, I fancy this baby is like him.”

“Nonsense, Lucy!” said Margaret hastily. “It is ridiculous to try to find out likenesses in infants.” Yet Margaret had thought the very same thing, only she could not bring herself to say so. “Besides, Mr. Shirley’s eyes are hazel, and this baby’s are quite dark.”

“Yes, but its features are shaped the same, at least I think they will be, when it is bigger; but most likely I am mistaken; and Mr. Shirley could not help the baby being like him, you know, if it was so. I shall like him to see it, however, and to see my Margaret, too, in her pretty new dress.” And then she pulled out the plaits, and smoothed the collar, and looked at her sister with as much pride and pleasure as if she had been dressed out for a ball.

Just then a well-known rap was heard. Lucy forgot that there was now another to open the door, and encountered Rose in the passage; so Mr. Shirley, for he it was, had the pleasure of seeing two pretty faces at once; for Rose, with a complexion like her name, and a profusion of flaxen hair, was, in her own way, as much of a beauty as either of her young mistresses.

To Lucy’s exceeding wonder, and some disappointment, Mr. Shirley did not exhibit half the astonishment she had expected, at the shape her dream, upon which he had often rallied her, had taken.

“So, this is the bishop’s mitre, after all!” said he, after hearing the story, and looking attentively at the babe, as it slept in Margaret’s arms: “well, it may be the bishop himself *in futuro*; who knows but we may all live to see these tiny arms flourishing from the pulpit in lawn sleeves?” And then he stooped down and kissed its forehead with more

tenderness than the lords of the creation generally show to the infant representatives of themselves.

"Where can he have come from, dear little lamb?" said Margaret; "we have not the slightest idea who his parents can be."

"Whoever they may be," said the young man, "they have shown their judgment, in their choice of a nurse. But will he not disturb your rest, dear Margaret? You must not let him hurt your health, or else I shall pack him up again in his box, one day when your back is turned, and send him off to the Foundling Hospital."

"Ah, but you will never find me with my back turned, you may depend upon that. Dear babe!"—and she kissed him—"he has occupied all my thoughts ever since he came into the house."

"And that is an additional reason why I should try to get him out of it. I shall be jealous."

"What! of a baby?"

"Of anything that occupied *all* your thoughts, even if it were a baby of my own." And then he bent forward again to caress it. And Mr. Slender came in, and gave the whole history again, to which Mr. Shirley listened with admirable patience, as well as to all the reflections to which it gave rise, but betrayed so little either of surprise or curiosity on the occasion, that Lucy began to think that either he knew more about the matter than he chose to acknowledge, or that the sending new-born babes in boxes to the houses of poor clergymen could not be so very wonderful an occurrence in the romance of real life as it had appeared to her.

"I suppose it is my ignorance of what is going on in the world," thought she to herself. As for Margaret, she was satisfied that whatever might be the cause of Shirley's unwondering calm, want of feeling had nothing to do with it, for he had kissed the baby with almost woman's tenderness, and looked at it with almost parental admiration.

"Do you know," said Lucy, when he had gone away, "I do think Mr. Shirley knows whom this pretty baby belongs to."

"I cannot think that," said Margaret, "why should he not tell us if he did?" Yet the remark disturbed her as a thought of the relaxed morals generally imputed to

theatrical life, came over her mind, too vague to admit of definition, yet too vivid to leave her quite at ease.

"Perhaps he has promised its parents not to tell," Lucy went on; "perhaps they are friends of his—surely they cannot be players; how droll it would be!"

"It is not very likely, my little Lucy," said Mr. Slender, "that players should have the means of sending a child away from them so liberally, I may say so lavishly, provided for, as this dear infant has come tous. No; I have my own idea on the subject, and as I have no secrets from my dear children, I will tell you what it is."

Both Margaret and Lucy were all eyes and ears at this avowal. Mr. Slender, reminded by the bustle the little handmaid Rose was making in the kitchen, that the house was no longer exclusively to themselves, lowered his voice, as he continued,—

"When I dined at Farmer Hurst's, on Christmas-day, his wife told me that she had let her rooms, some weeks since. She is in the habit of doing so to young students who have injured their health by too hard reading; and more than once I have known her to nurse them like a good Christian, as she is, through the silent sufferings of disappointment in not taking the degrees they had been labouring for, till they have found their rest in the grave; but her present tenants, she told me, are a young couple who wish to keep their marriage secret, till after the examination. The lady was confined a few days after her arrival, and Mrs. Hurst was requested to ask me to baptize the infant. I did not mention the circumstance when I came home, because I thought Mrs. Hurst might not wish it to be talked about just then, and which I did without seeing either the father or the mother. As to the babe itself, though I have baptized and christened some hundreds in my time, yet one so much resembles another, in my eyes, that I do not suppose if a dozen were held at the baptismal font at the same time, and then all changed nurses at the church door, that I could give one of them back to its right owner. Therefore, I do not pretend to say that this is the same which I baptized at Farmer Hurst's; but its name, at any rate, is the same—still there are many Henrys baptized every day in the year, at one place or another—but what makes me think this may

be the child of the lady who is lodging at the farm, is, that Mrs. Hurst told me that the mother was recovering very slowly, and that Dr. Statecase, who came every day from Cambridge to see her, was very urgent with her not to nurse the baby herself, but to allow it to be brought up by hand."

"Poor thing!" said Margaret, "how sorry she must have been to part with it!"

"But the baby does not seem sorry at all," said Lucy; "see how contentedly it sleeps away."

"Now," continued Mr. Slender, "Dr. Statecase is a first-rate, fashionable physician, that has his two guineas a visit; therefore, the lady could not have him go to see her every day, unless her husband was rich. It is evident that the parents of this dear infant cannot be poor, or they could not pay us so liberally,—nay, so nobly, for taking care of it; and, coupling all these things in my mind, I have a sort of notion that we have seen them,—in short, that they are not strangers to us."

"But we know nobody out of Creykedale," said Margaret, "excepting, indeed, Doctor and Mrs. Pluffy, and their daughters, and them we scarcely see once a year."

"Indeed," said Mr. Slender, with a sagacious smile, and pointing to Margaret's finger, "how, then, did you come by that ring?"

"Ah, now I have it! now I guess!" exclaimed Lucy; "you think that the mother of the dear baby is the same lady that gave Margaret the ring."

"Oh, how I wish it might be," said Margaret. "I will hope it is! I think, now that I recall her to my mind, the babe is like her. It has the same dark eyes, the same long lashes, and its hair will be black, like hers, pretty darling as it is!"

"But, remember, my dear children," said Mr. Slender, "all this is only conjecture on my part; and it would be ungrateful, and, indeed, highly dishonourable in us, to push inquiry any further. Mrs. Hurst mentioned no names, and I am glad she did not; if the parties, from some motives of their own, wish their marriage to be kept secret, at present, we ought to avoid everything that may tend towards making it public. Mrs. Hurst says the young lady is an amiable creature; that she never sees anybody but her husband, and

a friend of his, who likewise comes from Cambridge, and that she bears her seclusion, as well as her sickness, with the greatest patience and sweetness."

"Oh, I am sure it must be the same!" cried Lucy. "You little darling!"—and here came a torrent of kisses—"what a dear, nice, pretty mamma you have got!"

"Hush, dear Lucy!" said Margaret, in a voice of alarm, hearing Rose in the passage; "do not let any one hear you breathe a word about what we think; remember, a secret ought to be sacred; besides, who knows but the dear baby might be taken away, if anything transpired from us respecting its parents?"

This view of the case frightened Lucy, and she promised to be guarded in everything she said. Mr. Slender commended her resolution, and the infant hero of the tale, having wisely chosen the moment of calm to wake up, and demand his supper in language that could neither be mistaken nor withstood, the administering it to him, undressing him, arraying him in his night-dress, kissing him in it, and, finally, hushing him to sleep again, afforded ample and delightful employment to both his young nurses for the remainder of the evening.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

NOTWITHSTANDING the bright gleam of prosperity which ushered in our new year, and for which we are all grateful to the uttermost, to-day has been to us a momentous and mournful one, though it has terminated better than I durst have hoped; yet I feel that if many more such were to fall to my lot, my bodily frame would not have strength to bear the wear and tear of mind attendant on them. Its very commencement was melancholy. I was called up at daylight, to go to a cottage two miles off, to baptize a poor infant who had come into this world of trouble only a few hours before, at the price of its mother's life, and which seemed too feeble, itself, to remain long after her—it was a painful scene; poverty, loneliness, heart-rending grief!

I took the innocent babe into my arms, and signed on it the blessed sign of everlasting life. I then prayed with the bereaved father, and afterwards went a mile further, to Farmer Tomkins, to entreat him to send some nourishment to the poor family, who were faint with watching and hunger.

By the time I returned home, a young couple who were asked the third time at church on Sunday, were impatiently waiting at the church door, for me to perform the marriage ceremony. I thought of the scene I had left, and it seemed to me that the poor little bride, a mere girl, was awed by the expression of sadness which I could not prevent my countenance from betraying.

I then had to read the funeral service over one of my oldest parishioners; an honest, good man, who had lived forty-seven years in one service. Such is the history of life—births, marriages, deaths, with more or less of care and suffering belonging to each state!

I then had to go on what might be justly termed an errand of charity, for it was to reconcile two brothers, who had long been at enmity; and by dint of first talking to them separately, and then bringing them into each other's presence, I had the comfort of seeing them shake hands before I left them. The poor old mother, a widow, wept for joy; and, if I mistake not, I saw a tear in the eye of the eldest son, though he is a sturdy character, and has, it appears to me, been mainly to blame in the disunion.

These duties, some of them widely apart from the others, occupied me till the afternoon. I then began to feel the necessity of refreshment, as well as of rest, and was glad when I found myself at my own door; but I had scarcely opened it before Lucy, with an important face, beckoned me to come into my little study instead of going into the parlour.

"There is somebody waiting for you, dear papa," said she; "he has been here almost ever since you went out: he does not look very much like a gentleman, and he is not quite a common person, either."

I believe I turned pale: the fact was, I was actually faint for want of food, and then there are so many more avenues open to disagreeables, than to agreeables, that when anything

out of our common routine is announced, I have, of late, been cowardly enough to imagine that it is more likely to portend evil than good.

"Nay, my dear papa," said Lucy, taking my hand, "he is very civil, and talked very kindly to Margaret and me ; but but we did not know what to do with him, at last, to amuse him ; so what do you think I was doing when you came in ? I was playing at backgammon with him. But now you had better have something to eat before you go into the parlour. I will run and broil you a bit of bacon, and get you a couple of eggs in a minute, and then I will go back to him, and Margaret shall come and wait upon you."

I thanked the dear child for her attention, but somehow my appetite had gone in a moment ; and I went into the parlour with the kind of composure that arises from a determination to know the worst. I there saw a decent, grave-looking sort of a personage, of about fifty years of age, in a snuff-coloured suit of clothes, and a bob wig to match—he had spectacles on his nose, which was somewhat of the longest ; his complexion was sallow, his countenance mild and melancholy ; he was sitting opposite the fire, his eyes fixed upon the bars, his right hand in his bosom, his left on his knee, in the precise attitude recommended by the ingenious Mr. Dilworth, in his "Rules on Good Breeding," to be found at the end of his spelling-book. The instant I beheld him, I foreboded his errand—there are some animals one seems to know by instinct, even although one may never have seen the species before. He rose at my entrance, and bowed very civilly. In so doing, however, he altered the position of his right arm, and I perceived that he had lost a hand, and that its place was supplied by an iron hook, which he partly concealed in his handkerchief. This was a misfortune, and no fault ; nevertheless, it gave him, somehow, an ominous appearance. I made him a sign to sit down again, for I felt a rising in my throat, that for a moment prevented me from speaking, but he made another bow, a little lower than the first, and in a solemn sort of voice, said, "Mr. Slender, I presume."

"The same, sir," I replied, with as much cheerfulness as I could assume ; "may I ask, in return, to whom I have the pleasure of speaking ?"

"My name is Catchpole, sir," said he; "but I am a stranger to you, and I only wish my introduction had been on pleasanter business."

So saying, he took out of his pocket an envelope of two or three papers, and slowly unfolding them, one after another, at last came to a stamped parchment, to which I saw my own signature affixed, and instantly recognized it as the bond I had fatally given for Thomson.

"I am instructed, sir," said he, "by Messrs. Trickem and Trouncem, highly respectable gentlemen, attorneys at Norwich, to serve you with this notice," producing an additional slip of parchment as he spoke; "and it is my office to remain in possession of the premises, until the sum for which you have given security shall be paid."

My poor girls looked with wondering terror, first at him, and then at me, and and for their sakes I summoned up all my fortitude. "I doubt not, sir," said I, "that you only do your duty; but it is in vain for you to think of staying here. It is I that must go with you wherever the law may please to sentence me for the crime of poverty, to which I cannot but plead guilty."

"Perhaps matters may not stand so bad with you, sir, as at first you may imagine," said Mr. Catchpole, very mildly; "you may, by taking a little time, seek out some of your friends able to assist you in this emergency. You will find me very easy to please, and willing to make matters agreeable."

Alas! at this suggestion the words of the wisest of men rushed into my mind:—

"Wealth maketh many friends, but the poor is separated from his neighbour."

"All the brethren of the poor do hate him. How much more do his friends go far from him. He pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him."

Whilst I reflected thus, Mr. Catchpole continued, in the same mild, monotonous tone—"I am one of those people that wish to make things comfortable; and if there should be a few favourite things, or a little plate or linen that you like to put out of the way, why, I am not the man to see where it is put—that's all I can say. I don't go looking about the gardens or outhouses, and if a gentleman is come upon, un-

expectedly, for all he has in the world, I don't see why he is not to take some little care of himself, particularly when he has others to take care of too."

"Sir, you are very considerate," said I, for the man really seemed touched with my situation, "and I do not doubt that you see the matter in some light which enables you to reconcile your compassion towards me with your duty to your employers; but that is not the case with me. The instrument you have in your hand, I signed, in an evil moment, sure enough; but nevertheless with my eyes open. I am, therefore, bound to pay the penalty to the utmost. But I am certain all I have in the house, I may say in the world, would not bring enough to satisfy one-half of the claim against me; and, therefore, if Messrs. Trickem and Trouncem are determined, or rather, perhaps, I ought to say, compelled, in their professional capacity, to proceed against me with the utmost rigour of the law, I had rather go to prison at once. I will prepare my daughters for my departure, and in half an hour I will be ready to accompany you." The man very civilly replied, that every gentleman was the best judge of what might be most agreeable to himself, but that there was no such hurry in the matter, but what he could wait very well till the morning; and with this agreeable alternative of closing my doors for the night, with a bailiff under the same roof with my daughters, or leaving them altogether unprotected and forlorn, I left the room with sensations that swelled my heart well-nigh to breaking.

I found my poor girls trembling with anxiety; dismay was in their countenances, when I told them I must leave them that night. "Not to-night, dear father, not to-night!" said Margaret, bursting into tears; "that cruel man cannot have the heart to insist on your going away from us to-night!"

"And, perhaps, to be put in a damp bed!" cried Lucy, "and get a rheumatic fever."

"My children," said I, "it is not the fault of the poor man; he only does his duty; and I had rather go with him than that he should remain here. Put me a few things together; we will have prayers before we separate, and let us hope we shall meet again in peace and comfort." Lucy turned away without a word, and began collecting my brushes and shaving-things; her tears, poor child! dropping upon

them as she wrapped them up in paper. As for Margaret, she was overwhelmed, and could not even make an effort towards exerting herself. I confess I thought she had had more resolution ; but this blow seemed to strike her to the heart, and she stood with her hands clenched, and such an expression of despair on her countenance, that I was inexpressibly alarmed for her.

Fortunately, at that moment, who should suddenly enter but Mr. Shirley. He had knocked twice, it seems, but Rose was out, and in our affliction we had heard nothing, so the second time Mr. Catchpole had very civilly opened the door, and let him in. He looked aghast at the situation in which he found us.

"What is the matter?" said he, "what has happened? Tell me, that I may help you. Surely you will not have any secrets from me!"

He spoke in such an earnest, affectionate tone, and took Margaret's hand with such brotherly love, that the poor girl was softened by it into a burst of tears, which happily, in some degree, relieved her suppressed agony, and she sobbed out,—

"My father, my poor father!"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the young man ; "tell me, I beseech you, my dear sir, is it difficulty, is it debt? Oh yes! now I see plainly—the stranger that opened the door to me ; the preparations for your leaving the house. I can guess what has happened. What a selfish wretch I am—what an ungrateful wretch, not to have prevented it?"

"My dear young friend," said I, "do not reproach yourself, the trifle between us would have been of no avail in so heavy a calamity as mine."

"I shall never forgive myself," he hastily interrupted me, "for having suffered you to know such a moment as this. Your daughter will never forgive me ; but, thanks to God, it is not yet too late. Where is the man that opened the door to me? I will be your security, for whatever he may have against you."

For a moment I was cheered by the idea of gaining a little time with my daughters, who looked up into my face with eager hope at this proposal ; but an instant's reflection

showed me how wrong it would be in me to allow this young man, in a fit of enthusiastic compassion, to expose himself, by a similar act, to all the evils I had drawn upon myself, by my own improvidence.

"No," said I, pressing his hand warmly within mine, "I cannot avail myself of your proposition, it carries with it all the generosity, as well as the imprudence, of youth. But I will never be accessory to another person committing the error which, were my time to come over again, I would not commit for any one breathing—at least, not in the mind I am in. No sir, remember betimes the counsel of the wisest of men—

"'Be not thou of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts!'

"'If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?'

"Alas! if I had attended to this injunction, I should not now have the commentary on it come home to me so grievously."

"No one shall take your bed from under you, sir, whilst I stand by," said the young man, all animation; "give me leave to step into the next room to speak to the man there."

"Not with the intention of becoming my security," said I; "on that head my mind is made up. Besides, pardon me, my young friend," I added, "but it is not probable, considering your age and profession, that your security——"

"Would be of any value, I suppose you are going to say," he interrupted me, his forehead crimsoning over with pride, or anger, but it passed in a moment, and he laughed good-humouredly. "Well," said he, "you have piqued my honour, and now you must take the consequences." So saying, he went out of the room. Almost before he had shut the door, Lucy threw herself into my arms, to prevent my going after him.

"Let him have his own way, my dear papa; he is an angel sent to our assistance."

"Ah, but my dear child," said I, "how wrong it would be in me to purchase my own safety with his danger. What if I should see him thrown into the very prison from which he now would snatch me, at all risks?"

"He would be better able to endure it, at his age, than you are at yours, dear father," said Margaret; "and I feel assured he would not repine in such a cause; besides, it is not likely that he should be so destitute of friends, in a case of emergency, as we are."

"As for that, my child," I replied, "players have seldom any real friends; their choice of their profession, in general, disobliges and separates them from their natural ties; and others who seek them for mere amusement are not likely to stick by them when they can amuse no longer."

I should, perhaps, have made some instructive remarks on the subject, but I was interrupted by the return of Mr. Shirley; his countenance glowed with satisfaction.

"It is all settled for the present," said he. "Mr. Catchpole thinks he shall be able to prevail on the quill-drivers to give us time to look out our resources, and he is now ready to depart."

My girls were in an ecstasy, and I myself could not help feeling cheered at the idea of a reprieve. Nevertheless, I thought it right to impress upon the mind of my young benefactor, at any rate, in intention, that I had no resources whatsoever to look forward to.

"But I have," he interrupted with hilarity; "I have my benefit to come. I intend to have 'All's Well that Ends Well,' with the 'Agreeable Surprise;' and then I hope, before the season closes, to get up the 'Wedding Day,' the 'Trip to Dover,' and the 'Honeymoon,'—all very taking things."

He was so gay and happy that our cloud dispersed before his cheerfulness; Lucy's tears were all turned to smiles, and my Margaret raised her gentle head again, like a pale rose shaking off the storm-drops that had bent it awhile to the earth.

Mr. Shirley looked at her with as much compassion as if she had been his own sister. He has certainly, under all his volatility, a tender and excellent heart, and, what is more surprising, it appears no way corrupted by his way of life, which I consider marvellous. He would not listen either to remonstrances from me, or thanks from my girls, who were too happy in retaining me, to reflect upon any future consequences; but saying he would see me again in a day or

two, he shook hands with us all round, and ran out of the house.

I then went into the parlour again to Mr. Catchpole, who was sitting in precisely the same attitude in which I first beheld him. He rose, however, on my entrance, and, after having apologized for having stirred the fire in my absence, told me that the young gentleman had explained matters very satisfactorily to him, and that he did not doubt but that his employers, Mrs. Trickem and Trouncem, who were very reasonable as well as honourable men, would be willing, on his representation, to give me a little time to make my own arrangements ; and that the costs of his own time, and serving the notice, could also stand over to a future period. I expressed candidly to him my reluctance that Mr. Shirley should have entered into any responsibility on my account ; and I thought it right to state that he was a player, with whom I had become acquainted by accident, and that I knew nothing of his family or connections, but that I believed him to be of good and honourable principles. Mr. Catchpole smiled, really very benevolently for a bailiff, and said,—

“The young gentleman has explained everything to me, sir, very candidly. I find you have assisted him in some little troubles of his own, and, to my thinking, one good turn deserves another.”

I could not help being struck with the young man's delicacy, in putting his kind desire to serve me upon the footing of obligation received. Mr. Catchpole was now on his legs, to take his departure ; but as I bore no ill-will to the poor man, I requested he would not leave us without taking a morsel of something ; and whilst Lucy and Margaret were busy with the baby, and our little handmaid was preparing supper, of which, to say the truth, I began to feel great want myself, we fell into chat, and I found that he, alas ! like all the sons of Adam, had had as many sorrows and trials as he had strength to compete with.

His father was, he told me, a respectable farmer, in Staffordshire, and he, early in life, became attached to a young person, who was the daughter of a neighbour, in similar rank, but somewhat more wealthy, and proportionably more lofty in his ideas. He was determined, it seems,

not to give his daughter to any one but a professional man—a strange and daily increasing folly among the middling classes, which, to my poor way of thinking, will, if not timely checked, rob England alike of her prosperity and independence, as well as of her happiness. To please this vanity, however, young Catchpole was articted to an attorney, at the next market town, to whom he soon, it seems, became only too valuable by his assiduity and abilities; for, when his time was expired, he found that his articles had been drawn up with a flaw in them, purposely, as he could not help suspecting, in order, by rendering them unavailing, to secure his services for a longer period; his master proposed to him to renew his articles, for seven years more, at a salary, but the poor fellow, indignant at the treatment he had received, declined the offer.

Meantime matters had gone on badly with his father, who died poor, and even in debt; the hundred-pound stamp tax on attorney's indentures came out just at that time, and formed a heavy, indeed, as it proved, an insuperable obstacle to his again articling himself. He went on from year to year, working at a small salary, to endeavour to save this sum, but in vain,—the necessities of his younger brothers and sisters pressed too heavily upon him; meanwhile the father of his affianced one grew daily more and more dissatisfied with the engagement he had suffered his daughter to enter into when he regarded her suitor as the son of a man nearly as rich as himself, and likely to become a respectable professional man. The lovers were tried with long separations, parental harshness, everything that could embitter their intercourse; still they were faithful to each other, and the poor fellow looked to an interview once in a month or six weeks as a reward for the drudgery to which he was subjected all the intervening time, in sitting twelve or fourteen hours daily at the desk of his employer, who, I found, by his account, was at once jealous of his influence with his clients, and yet exceedingly grasping in taxing his time and abilities to the utmost.

"I had always a grave look," said the poor man, "even when a child, before I knew what care was; and my anxieties and disappointments, as I arrived at man's estate, very naturally added to the reflectiveness of my disposition.

My master's connection was chiefly among country people, and they, attributing my gravity to wisdom, used very often to ask for me by the name of 'the serious gentleman,' and preferred consulting me to my master. I do not know how far he might have liked the continuance of my popularity, but it was soon put an end to by an accident, the nature of which you may easily guess!" He glanced at his iron hook, as he spoke, and then continued his humble narration. In separating two brothers in a quarrel, the mother being distracted at beholding a loaded gun between them, the piece accidentally went off, and shattered his right hand. This was a deathblow to his prospects, and nearly to himself; after a long confinement to a sick-bed, he rose from it utterly destitute, and incapable of pursuing the calling to which he had sacrificed the best twenty years of his life, in a subordinate capacity. His intended father-in-law made his misfortune the grounds of a positive command to his daughter to see him no more, and before the year was out he, by threats and unkindness, and making her home a scene of discord on her account, drove her into a marriage with the surgeon who visited the family—still adhering to his old ambition of having a professional man for his son-in-law.

"I never saw her afterwards, poor thing," said Mr. Catchpole, "but once, and that was by accident for a few minutes. She had the misfortune to become deranged within a very short time after her marriage; it is now ten years ago, and she remains in the same state; it would be a satisfaction to me to know that she was in her quiet grave; but, however, we must have our trials in this life, and we cannot choose of what nature they may be. I sometimes think I could have borne any others better than those that have fallen to my lot; but, doubtless, if any others would have been better for me I should have had them instead."

I was really edified by this poor man's uncomplaining submission. I could have taken him by the hand, or rather by the hook, that was next me; but he had it in his bosom, and I observed that he seemed to press it tight on his breast, as if to keep down a sigh. He told me that his employer showed a more friendly disposition to him after his misfortune than before; and as he could no longer indorse, or write with sufficient legibility for his profession,

he threw the means of subsistence into his hands as a bailiff's follower and other offices connected with the misfortunes of life.

I told him that, with his evidently compassionate nature, he must often be pained by seeing afflictions that he had no means of alleviating. He replied that at first he had found it so, but that, by habit, everything became neutralized—that he observed all persons whatsoever had their troubles, even those who, to all outward appearance, might be deemed the highest objects of envy; that he had invariably seen the oppressed more happy than their oppressors; and that even in the worst circumstances there was generally, when they came to their climax, some gleams of hope or accidental aid which had not been reckoned upon.

I am sure I might agree with him in this respect, for who would have thought that, in my hour of trouble, a young man, a mere player, of whom I have so slight a knowledge, should have stepped forward and been the instrument of procuring me, at any rate, a short delay of my fate. Yet, I am not easy about him; I cannot bear the thought of exposing another to an evil that appeared so terrible to myself. I must think of it more largely to-morrow, but at present I am still too much agitated with what has passed.

My dear girls summoned us to a nice little hot supper just as Mr. Catchpole had concluded his narrative; they looked anxiously into his countenance and mine to see what the nature of our conversation had been. I believe they saw I was pleased with him, for Lucy smiled at him as she drew his chair towards the table, and Margaret attended to him with an assiduity that precluded the necessity of his making much use of his iron hand, which, however, was so ingeniously contrived that he could screw a knife into it and use it dexterously enough.

He told us many moving, and some very interesting, stories of parties and circumstances with which his business had made him acquainted, and my girls, on whom anything new never fails to make a lively impression, were alternately excited to compassion and amazement, as sorrow or villany preponderated in his theme. When he took his leave I could not help telling him that I hoped we might meet again, for I was really pleased with his conversation, as well

as with the kindness of his behaviour. He replied only by a staid sort of smile, wished us good-night in a friendly manner, and once more I had the happiness of feeling myself free and with my children. I would not let them enter into any conversation on the events of the evening. I was worn out, and wished to keep my mind as calm as I could. We had prayers, and parted with thankful hearts. I wrote thus far in my journal, and am now about to compose myself to rest, and to put away, if I can, those worldly anxieties and desponding thoughts that war against the soul.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom shall I fear ?

"The Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall I be afraid ?"

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FIRST PRESENT.

"I HAVE not slept. All the night long I was thinking of young Shirley, and of the liability I have suffered him to incur for me. I ought not to have permitted it. I will go to Norwich this very day, and know the worst at once, whilst I have yet the liberty, and, thanks to this blessed infant, the means. There is a grief again : what is to be done with him if I am taken away ? My daughters, too, are sad and fearful : they go about the house in silence, and tread softly, as if they were afraid of being heard from without. Margaret's sweet countenance has a cloud of uneasiness and alarm upon it. She turns pale if she hears a knock at the door, and Lucy and she look at one another as if they were afraid to open it. Poor things ! they dread lest their father should be taken away from them, and truly I dread it too ; for it appears strange to me that Trickem and Trouncem should take the word of a young player for so large a sum. I fear Mr. Catchpole's goodness of heart may have misled his judgment, in this instance ; perhaps he will get himself into trouble by it, poor man ! Yes, I will go by the first coach."

These reflections passing through Mr. Slender's mind,

kept him silent at breakfast ; and as soon as it was over he promulgated to his daughters the resolution he had taken. They heard him with dismay, for never before within their remembrance had they been deprived of their father's society for twenty-four hours in succession : but they could find no arguments wherewith to dissuade him from a proceeding which they felt to be honest and right. Margaret proceeded to put up a change of linen and his best coat into a carpet-bag, and Lucy, insisting upon carrying it herself, speedily bonneted and shawled herself, to walk by his side.

When Lucy returned she found Margaret in tears. She clasped her in her arms. "Why, darling Margaret," she exclaimed, "what is the matter? You will break my heart if you take to crying and fretting ; and I know you do—I have seen you graver and graver this last ten days ; and you eat nothing, and I daresay you do not sleep. Oh, if you die I shall die too !"

"But I am not going to die, dear Lucy," said Margaret, wiping her eyes, and trying to smile ; "it is very foolish of me, but I felt so sad when I saw our dear father go away. We seemed so alone in the world !"

"But we are together, my own Margaret. We have never had any other friends than each other, scarcely any other acquaintance, indeed, and yet we have always been happy till now."

"Oh yes, and always shall be with each other," responded Margaret quickly, for she felt a sort of self-reproach at the conviction of Lucy's entire devotedness to her. "I am sure of that. Still a little society is pleasant."

"And yet, dear Margaret, how often you have said, when Mr. Allspice or Mr. Makeweight have called with the vestry accounts, in an evening, and papa has asked them to stay to tea, that you were glad when they went away, and that you had rather we were always by ourselves."

"I know I have—but I was not thinking of Mr. Allspice or Mr. Makeweight when I spoke."

"Perhaps you were thinking of Mr. Shirley," said Lucy ; "but then there are so few like him."

"None !" said Margaret, with a sort of stifled sigh ; "at least, none that we have ever seen ; but it would not be right in us, dear Lucy, to make comparisons to the disadvan-

tage of our neighbours, and it is very wrong in me to be discontented; and it is that which makes me cry, and feel so dissatisfied with my myself, and so unhappy."

"But it is no wonder, darling Margaret, that you should wish sometimes for a little society, or a little change of some kind or other," said Lucy, in her most endearing tone—"you know you are a woman compared to me; you are eighteen, and of course you cannot always be satisfied with such trifles as amuse me. I have never been unhappy in my whole life, except when I have seen dear papa anxious, and my darling Margaret sorry: but for myself, I do not know what sorrow means. Is it not odd? I often wonder, when I wake in the morning and hear the larks singing in the air, whether they or I are the happiest. Oh, it is very nice to feel so happy; how grateful I ought to be."

"And you are, dear Lucy: a contented heart, you know, my father says, is a continual thanksgiving, and a cheerful spirit a perpetual hymn. I, too, have always been happy till lately—as happy as you can be; though not quite so lively, perhaps; but then, as you rightly say, I am older than you are, and I suppose that makes some difference."

"Oh yes, no doubt. I daresay when I am eighteen I shall not be playing with a string and a cork, to make Daisy-face run after me round the paddock; or climbing into the cedar tree to read Thomson's "Seasons," on that nice crooked branch that seems as if it was made for an arm-chair; or doing fifty foolish things that I do now. But it is time enough to alter when the time for alteration comes. Ah, now you smile, and look like your own dear self again. So, now, what shall we do? Shall we take the baby round the fields? or shall I go and tell Rose about dinner?"

"I do not like to go out now that dear papa is away; and it is too soon to think of dinner. Perhaps we had better sit down to our work, and then we can read to each other and nurse baby by turns."

"And so we can, and that will be very nice. I wish we had something new, though; we have read all our own books over and over again."

"I wish we had Wordsworth's poems; I should so like to see them."

"And so should I, particularly with Mr. Shirley's marginal

notes." This sly insinuation of Lucy's raised a faint tinge on Margaret's cheek as she cast a half-reproachful look at her, which Lucy was on the point of propitiating with a kiss, when lo! a gentleman, mounted on a fine gray horse, rode up to the gate. "Well, I do believe here is Mr. Shirley himself!" she exclaimed; "how nice it will be if he has come with the book!"

And so it was—Mr. Shirley himself! who was just then fastening his bridle to the white palings. His steed secured, he opened the little gate, reached the door in three bounding steps, and knocked at it with that triumphant air of happy youth, certain of diffusing pleasure by his presence, which belongs only to the spring-time of life, ere disappointment has chilled its hopes, or satiety deadened its enjoyments.

Lucy flew to welcome him with smiles as joyous as his own. "Why is it that I do not go to meet him?" Margaret asked herself—but her feet seemed spellbound. The young man, however, perceived it not—he sprang forward, he seized her hands, and ardently pressed them, whilst he inquired after her health.

"How kind you have been to us," said Margaret, as he took a chair by her side, still retaining her hand in his; "but my father has been so uneasy about you."

"Uneasy about such a trifle! I thought he possibly might be so, therefore I came to set his mind at ease upon the subject, for the matter is all settled; at any rate, for the present."

"Ah! but at your own risk; and it is that which vexes my dear father so! He could not rest till he set off to Norwich to see Mr. Wilson."

"What! is he gone? how vexatious! I ought to have come sooner, and then he would have been spared the trouble and anxiety of his journey; indeed, he ought never to have had any anxiety about the matter—it is selfish and abominable in me! It was that foolish rowing party made me so late."

"But nothing would have kept my father from going; he was determined to tell Mr. Wilson exactly how the case stood, and ——"

"And how does it stand, may I ask? does your father mean to say to Mr. Wilson, 'Here is a poor beggarly

itinerant player has offered to become my security for a bond which he has no more the means of discharging than I myself have ?”

“No, he does not mean to say that ; but he does mean to say that a young man, probably not much richer than himself, has been led away by his generous and noble feelings.” And here Margaret’s own feelings overpowered her, and she hid her face in her handkerchief. Lucy’s eyes instantly filled. The young man sought to change the subject.

“I have brought you the poems you promised me to accept,” said he, drawing a volume from the pocket of his great-coat.

“Oh how glad I am !” cried Lucy, instantly dispersing her tears ; “we were wishing for them so much, just before you came in.”

Margaret looked up, and took the book with a sweet smile that cheered the heart of her lover, and a graceful inclination of her head that might have well become a duchess.

“Shall I read something to you ?” said he, hanging over her, as she glanced her eye across the table of contents.

“Oh yes, do !” exclaimed Lucy. But Margaret was uncomfortable, she scarcely knew why, at receiving him in her father’s absence, and uneasy lest the uncommon spectacle of a horse handsomely caparisoned at the gate should excite the curiosity of the passers-by, hesitated to reply ; at length she said, with some embarrassment, “Perhaps we had better not detain you now—my father will be back to-morrow, at least, we hope so ; and when he is at home, you know how glad we always are to see you.”

“And when he is not at home, I have your full leave to stay away ! Is not that what I am to infer ?” he asked, with a forced smile, divided between his respect for her delicacy and his mortification at her self-command. Margaret cast down her eyes and was silent, and Lucy was astonished to see her sister, for the first time in her life, deficient, as it seemed to her, in the common forms of courtesy. Margaret, however, said nothing more, so the young man rose to take his leave.

“To-morrow, then,” said he, extending a hand to each of

the sisters ; "to-morrow I am authorized to present myself!"

"You could not have stayed to-day, at any rate," said Margaret, with a tantalising smile ; "see how impatient your horse is." And truth to say, the gallant steed was pawing the ground, as if he were rehearsing for a melodrama.

"Yes, he takes liberties with me, because he knows I am not his master—I borrowed him of Lord ——, that is, I borrowed him of a friend," and, with some little confusion in his manner, he bowed, and gracefully vaulting into his saddle was out of sight in a moment.

"What a beautiful horse!" said Lucy ; and she thought how nice it must be to canter it across the moor.

"What a beautiful book!" said Margaret, and she longed to press it to her lips.

Ah, dear readers! how delightful is a first present! the first offering of yet timid love! "It is twice blessed," blessed to the giver and to the receiver—however simple it may be! a flower, a bird, a drawing, a book! It is a hope, a pledge, a promise—the first link in a chain of interests and enjoyments in common which blends two beings in the reciprocation of kindness and of interests, which *may* last not only through earthly, but through heavenly existence—that is to eternity! *L'ambre ne repand pas un parfum aussi doux que les objets touchés par l'objet que l'on aime.* So it was that Margaret seemed to inhale fragrance from the pages on which the eyes that had told her such tales of love had so often rested! These pages did, moreover, actually impart a perfume of something delicious,—

"Naid and Cassia's balmy smells,"

she knew not what ; but it afforded her excuse to bring them very often into contact with her lips. Then, the outside was so pretty! it was mottled—a sort of emerald green with red spots, like a blood-stone. Margaret thought she had never seen anything of the kind half so pretty. The volume was not new ; but she liked it a thousand times better for that : and then, as Lucy had prognosticated, she began to look for the pencil marks, and to pause on the

passages they pointed out ; until fearful of anticipating her pleasures, she checked herself, and determined to begin with the beginning, and not suffer her eye to wander out of course, even though the tempting marginal note should be only a few lines beyond.

Lucy was delighted to see her sister so happy. "We shall not be dull now, dear Margaret," said she. "How lucky it was that Mr. Shirley should happen to bring the book, just when we were wanting something to cheer us. We will have dinner directly, and then I will clear away the things and get my knitting, because I can do that without thinking about it, and you shall read and I will listen ; won't it be nice, darling ?"

And then came the coaxing kiss ; and then the dinner of rice milk and roasted potatoes, and a saucer of raspberry jam to finish with ; and then came the baby ; and then, whilst Rose paraded it up and down the garden, came the book.

"What shall we begin with," said Lucy, "shall it be Genevieve ?"

"No," said Margaret ; "I should not like to hear that again just now." There was, indeed, no occasion for any second reading of it for her—too deeply had every line of it sunk into her heart ever to be forgotten.

So they fixed upon "Betty Foy." It was just the story for girls like themselves, versed in the "short and simple annals of the poor." The poet of Nature spoke at once and fully to the hearts of these children of Nature. The truth of his delineations, the beauty of his descriptions, the deep, yet simple, pathos of his incidents, the solemnity of his reflections, all came home to their unsophisticated bosoms. Well could they recognize the pictures of cottage life, the rural ramble, the charm of familiar objects, endeared by affectionate associations, the wisdom that, as he truly says,—

"——lives with children round her knees,
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk
Man holds with week-day man, in the hourly task
Of the mind's business——."

The story of Ruth filled Lucy's laughing eyes with tears, and made them look like violets in an April shower, and Margaret's heart swelled with sympathy for the lonely grief of her

namesake, which she scarcely durst trust her voice to read aloud.

So passed the afternoon and evening. When bed-time came, the sisters were astonished to find that the day had been so short, and as they dropped asleep, the last words they said to each other were,—

“We shall see our dear father again to-morrow.”

But THE BOOK ! It was under Margaret’s pillow.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE CURATE’S JOURNAL.

I WAS fortunate in finding an outside place vacant, when the coach to Bury St. Edmund’s passed the end of the lane about noon. Lucy came with me to see me off. It was the first time, poor child, within her recollection, that I had ever taken a journey of such length, and she kissed me again and again at parting, and gave me so many injunctions to take care of myself, that some young collegians on the top of the coach could not help laughing ; and when she saw that she had drawn their attention upon her, she coloured up to the eyes, and darted away like a fawn.

We reached Bury just in time for the Norwich coach, and set off at full speed with four fine horses that would have done honour to a duke. Bless me ! how travelling is improved within these last twenty years ! There certainly is something very exhilarating in flying along at such a rate, in fresh air, and through a pleasant country. I do not wonder that Dr. Johnson, whose morbid temperament stood in need of some such excitement, should have reckoned quick travelling among the few positive pleasures of life. We went on at the rate of twelve miles an hour—it was fearful ! I, however, did not feel much alarm, for I was wedged in between two honest graziers, of such bulky dimensions that, had we been overturned, I think no more harm could have occurred to me than if I had been thrown between two feather beds : to be sure I might have been smothered. They were plain, sensible, well-behaved men, with a great deal of useful information about the value and condition of land. When we

had gone a little way, we chanced to fall in with the hounds, —they were crossing the road in full cry, and the gentlemen of the hunt took the gates in very good style ; the coachman pulled up for his passengers to have a good view of them. It was a most animating sight, but our horses were so put on their mettle by it that we were obliged to go on, and it was all that the coachman could do to pull them back into a trot. Notwithstanding the anxious nature of my errand, I certainly enjoyed the drive exceedingly. It was late when we got into Norwich, and I found myself more fatigued than I thought I should be ; nevertheless, I could not rest a moment until I called on Mr. Wilson. I made myself look as respectable as I could, and then went to his house. It was a very handsome one, with pillars before the door, plate-glass windows, and every external sign of wealth. This did not add to my courage ; I felt very insignificant at the thought of presenting myself. I knocked, nevertheless. The door was opened by a footman in a fine livery ; he took my name, and, returning in a minute, ushered me into a handsome room, something between a library and an office, where Mr. Wilson was sitting with a heap of papers before him, among which I instantly recognized my own unfortunate bond. He got up to receive me, and held out his hand in a friendly manner, which made me augur well of his disposition. I was beginning to explain the business on which I came, but he interrupted me, saying, "There is no occasion, Mr. Slender, for you to say anything more on the subject ; I have just received the bond from my attorneys, not half an hour since. I am satisfied with the security given for its payment, and I believe I may promise you that you shall never be put to any further trouble about it."

This declaration was a great relief to my mind, as, at any rate, it assured me that I should have time given me, and not again be taken by surprise. Nevertheless, such generous conduct was so unexpected that I could not help fearing it might originate in some representation Mr. Shirley had possibly given of his means, more in consonance with his wish to serve me than with the exactitude of sober calculation. I therefore felt myself called upon to make the same statement to Mr. Wilson that I had done before to Mr. Catchpole. He heard me to the end, and then said,—

"Mr. Slender, what you have said is every way honourable to your feelings, and proves you to be an honest man ; but on this matter you may set your mind at rest. I have heard from the young gentleman himself, and am fully satisfied with his statement of his means, which, indeed, I chance to know something of myself," and he smiled as he spoke ; "but," he continued, "before we drop the subject, I must do myself the justice to say that it never was my intention to distress you, and I am not very well pleased with my attorneys for going beyond their authority, in serving you with the bond, which I had merely consigned to their keeping, among other papers, in my capacity of trustee. I should have been exceedingly angry with them if any serious inconvenience had resulted to you from their officiousness. We will now, if you please," rising and ringing the bell, "go to dinner ; and whilst we are at table I will send for anything you may have at the inn, as we have a well-aired bed quite at your service. I trust, therefore, you will favour us with your company whilst you stay in Norwich."

The friendly manner in which he gave me this invitation made me feel quite comfortable in accepting it. We found his wife and a son and daughter in the dining-room ; he introduced them to me, and we sat down to a very excellent dinner, to which, with my mind lightened as it was, I was quite ready to do justice, it being, in fact, almost my supper-time, and I had taken nothing since leaving home, but a biscuit and a small glass of ale. After dinner we returned to the drawing-room, a few friends being expected. How handsomely were all the rooms furnished ! what improvements there are in everything since I have seen anything of fashionable people ! The richness of the carpets, the good taste of the curtains and sofas, the brilliancy of the lights, the beauty of the chimney-piece ornaments, the variety of classic urns, and bronzes, and the splendid volumes of engravings greatly delighted my fancy. We had music too. One of the young ladies played and sang with great execution, but I own I thought my Margaret's voice sweeter ; this, however, was most probably parental partiality, or perhaps the mere force of habit.

We did not retire till past eleven o'clock. I found a fire in my room, and my things laid out upon a dressing-table of

most elegant appearance and ingenious construction. What a variety of comforts were about me ! How magnificently do the opulent middle classes live in this country of merchant-princes, as they may well be called. They do, indeed, "fare sumptuously every day." A king could not, by any mandate whatever, five hundred years ago, have conjured up a tenth part of the luxuries with which their commerce surrounds them. Nor need their riches or the enjoyment of them be any impediment to their spiritual advancement, if used in a proper frame of mind, and acknowledged as proceeding from the mercy of the Lord, and not from their own wisdom or deserts.

As for myself, I feel, at this moment, too grateful and too happy to envy any one. I brought my journal with me, because I thought it might beguile a lonely sorrowful evening at the inn, and I have written in it thus far because it would have been a pity not to have turned to account my good fire, the writing-table, and the comfortable easy-chair in which I am sitting, as luxuriously as Doctor Plufty himself could do. I have now only my prayers to offer up for my dear girls, and my thanksgivings for myself.

"I will remember Thee, O Lord, upon my bed, and meditate on Thee, in the night watches.

"I will sing of thy power, yea I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning ; for thou has been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PROS AND CONS.

THE next morning Margaret and Lucy rose before their accustomed hour ; already beginning to count the time for their father's return. So Lucy gave the chairs and tables a double dusting, and rearranged the two china shepherds and the two china shepherdesses, and the two glass candlesticks that graced the chimney-piece ; whilst Margaret fed and dressed the baby, and trimmed her plants ; and so the morning passed, and with noon came dinner ; at last three o'clock struck.

"We shall soon have dear papa at home now," said Lucy. "How glad he will be to get back. Yet the time has not seemed half so long, since he went away, as I thought it would."

"We were so busy with our book all the evening," said Margaret. "It is very odd, but certainly this morning has appeared longer to me, already, than all yesterday did."

"That is because you have looked at the clock so often, dear Margaret; you thought it was two when it was only twelve."

Margaret felt a slight suffusion on her cheek as she caught herself looking at that self-same clock again, as she answered,—

"Perhaps it was because we dined earlier than usual."

"So we did," said Lucy, "and so much the better; for we shall enjoy our tea all the more; and with dear papa, too. He will be back by five. I shall make some cakes for him; and perhaps Mr. Shirley will come, too, and have some with us. Would not that be nice?"

"Very," said Margaret, her eyes glancing from the clock to the gate.

Away went Lucy to manipulate the cakes, and to initiate Rose into the art and mystery of watching their progress in the oven; and away went Margaret, with her softest tread, the baby in her arms, up stairs, to take a survey of the country through a window that looked over the moor, across which a well-practised eye might trace a road that led from Cambridge. Presently she saw a horseman approaching, but the horse was not a gray; it drew nearer—it was a bright bay; but the rider—she could not be deceived in him! She gazed a minute, and then stole as softly down stairs as she had stolen softly up, and seated herself in the bow-window, among her geraniums, with

"A sober certainty of waking bliss,"

that many persons spend all their lives in hunting after, at balls, races, bathing-places, and gaming-tables, without ever catching sight of it for a single moment. Ah! had they known what happy hours had been spent in that little parlour of the curate's, they might themselves have been

tempted to try the efficacy of mutual affection, and intellectual delights, and the sweet-sustaining consciousness of duties willingly incurred and faithfully discharged, which makes an orderly and love-illuminated home a compendium of all the happiness that can be hoped for in this our lower world—our preparatory stage for the higher degrees of it, which we are encouraged to hope for in the world above.

In less time than we have been making this reflection, Margaret saw her lover at the gate. She went herself, this time, to open it for him; *considerately* reflecting that both Lucy and Rose were busy with the cakes.

"I thought you were on horseback," said she, giving him her hand; and then she coloured, because she thought he would be sure to know she had seen him from the staircase window. "He will think I went up on purpose to look for him," she said to herself: and, in fact, did she not do so every day? even on days when she was certain she should not see him? There was always to be seen the road he *had* taken, and must take again, whenever he did come—and was not this worth looking at?

The "mantling blush," did not escape the young man's notice: there was indeed a strange sympathy between the life-current in his heart, and that on Margaret's cheek; whenever the colour heightened on one, the pulsations of the other quickened.

"And so I was on horseback when I came into the village, but I was determined you should not make my horse's impatience an excuse for sending me away to-day, as you did yesterday, so I left him at the Roebuck."

"Ah, but to-day, you will be my father's guest, so I shall have no right to send you away."

"And would you, if you could, cruel one? But I will have my revenge this very day; I will ask your father's leave to visit you as often, and whenever——"

"Oh no!" Margaret energetically interrupted him, "not to-day,—not on any account must you do that."

"And why not? Do you think he would forbid my visits, if he knew the footing?"

Margaret again interrupted him. "I do not know that he would," she replied, colouring very deeply; "he is so—so

kind-hearted—so guileless himself—so willing to make allowances for others—but I—I had rather——”

“What!” exclaimed her lover; “is it you, then, that raise obstacles to my suit? O Margaret! tell me at once what is it in me that you object to.”

“Object to!” repeated Margaret, with a sweet amazement; “ah, you jest—you know, you *must* know, it is impossible for any one to see anything in you yourself to object to.” And her eyes glowed with that tender and deferential admiration which is the dearest tribute man can receive from the being it is allotted him at once to command and to serve.

The young man felt the holiness of the look she had, for one moment, fixed upon him; the next she withdrew it, abashed—but he sought it again, under the clustering rings of gold that played upon her cheek, as she turned it blushing away.

“Think always so of me, my Margaret”—his voice subdued into love’s own whisper, by the throbbings of his heart,—“and the pride, the happiness of my life shall be to deserve the sweet praise of those dear, those unsophisticated lips.” And, in his enthusiasm, he all but pressed them to his own: seeing, however, that they quivered, and, coward-like,

“Did from their colour fly,”

he checked himself, and was rewarded for his forbearance with a smile that promised him future recompense. Still he returned to his argument. “But then,” said he, taking her hand, and kissing away a tear that had fallen upon it, “if you do not object to myself,”—and he smiled, somewhat proudly, as if conscious that he was anything but objectionable,—“it must be to my circumstances.”

Margaret looked down, in silence.

“Is it so, then?” he exclaimed, in a tone of deep mortification. “Yes,—I see very plainly,” and he suddenly relinquished her hand, “it is what appears to you my poverty—my position in society; fool that I was, to think that I was to be blest above the common lot of men—that I was to be loved for myself alone!”

“How unjust you are to yourself, and to me,” said Margaret, in a tone of tender reproach, as, with all the

simplicity and earnestness of sincere attachment, she placed her rejected hand again in his, with an entreating look that he would not cast it from him a second time. "What right have I to think of riches, or position in society? I wish, indeed, that you were rich, because I am not; and if I had a fortune, a thing I never thought of till this moment, I should be but too happy to give it all to you; and to see you enjoy, through my means, all the refinements you seem born to, and to which, I am sure, no nobleman in the land could do more credit."

"Dear, generous girl! the wish is enough for me, and your affection may one day be gratified. I am not without ambition—I long

'Th' applause of listening senates to command,'

to act some prominent part on the great stage of——"

"Oh!" interrupted Margaret—the glow of delight with which she had at first listened to him fading from her countenance, as he proceeded—"that is what I fear; that is my real, my only grief." And the tears fast rushed back to her eyes, whilst involuntarily she withdrew the hand she had all this time suffered to remain in his.

"What is it you mean?" he asked, astonished at her emotion. "Is there anything blamable in seeking for eminence in the career that is open before me?"

"It is the career itself," replied Margaret timidly; "it would be no consolation to me to know that you were on a greater stage. Neither Drury Lane nor Covent Garden would appear to me one whit more desirable than Barnwell."

The young man's astonishment expended itself in a sudden, an uncontrollable burst of laughter. Poor Margaret coloured deeply: to laugh when he saw her so serious, argued a levity of character in him that she could not have believed possible. True, he was by nature lively, she knew; yet he had always been so considerate—but, then, he was a player! She ought never to have thought of him for a moment; her father was poor, nay, poorer in reality than many a labourer in his parish; but his calling was as holy in him as in a bishop; and never would she bring a reproach upon him by causing it to be said, that he, a minister of the Gospel, had given his daughter in marriage to a player. "It is not

pride," she continued in her colloquy with herself. "If my father had been a farmer, a tradesman, even a rich gentleman, the calling of the man I love, whatever the world might think of it, would have been no obstacle; but to listen one day to my father in the pulpit, and the next to my husband on the stage, would be an inconsistency that would be visited on my dear father in censures to which he shall never be exposed by any weakness of mine;" and with this heroic resolution, she turned her swimming eyes towards her offending lover, whose hilarity was checked in an instant by their meek reproach.

"Forgive me, Margaret," he said, "I forgot myself; I ought to have borne in mind all that you may think of my *profession*. It is that, then, to which you object? I am right at last; is it not so?"

"I do not mean," said Margaret, "to censure your line of life, for a *profession* it can scarcely be called; there is nothing morally wrong in it; nothing of necessity degrading: on the contrary, I can easily imagine that it might be made highly conducive to the most refined instruction; at least, I know the few plays that I have read afforded me a great deal of pleasure; still, as the daughter of a clergyman, of a humble good man, who has only his piety to secure him the outward respect due to his sacred office, I must own, I confess"—and here Margaret's breath came shorter and shorter, and she heard the pulsations of her heart much more distinctly than the accents of her voice: she stopped; then made another effort to finish her sentence—"that, thinking as I do, and feeling as I do, I should be very wrong to engage myself to——" she could not proceed.

"To a player," said the young man, quietly finishing her sentence for her. "I had flattered myself," he continued after a brief pause, "that, whatever I might be, the sincerity of my love would have been accepted by you as a counter-balance to every disadvantage."

"And so it is," interrupted Margaret, with an energy new to her gentle nature; "too proud am I, too grateful, for possessing it; but I must not forget in my own happiness what is due to others. My dear father"—and here her voice faltered—"is even now too often treated with disrespect merely on account of his narrow circumstances; many

insulting things have been said already of his acquaintance with you, and could I bear to expose him still further to contempt by——”

The young man's eyes flashed fire, and a look of inimitable scorn passed over his countenance.

“No, Margaret,” he exclaimed with vehemence, “do not fear either for him or for your dear self. Neither you nor he shall be insulted by the grocer, or the butcher, or any of the great people of Creykdale; or even by the rector, by Doctor Pluffy himself:” and as he mentioned the name, some irresistible association with it curled his lip into a smile, and seemed to restore him to good humour. “I will be everything you wish, and nothing but what you wish. Speak, my beloved, what shall I be?”

Margaret hesitated—an idea had already come into her mind, but she shrank from communicating it, lest her forethought should seem to have anticipated her lover's importunity: her silence, however, afforded him such pretext for urging his question closer and closer, that at last, to disengage herself from his *pressing* inquiries, she drew back, and replied,—

“I thought that if—that is, I thought that if—that perhaps I might be able to assist you, if—if you were to keep a school.” The incorrigible laugh was very near bursting forth again; Margaret saw the difficulty he had to suppress it, and her heart was again grieved at his propensity to mirth, at such a moment.

“Can he really love me,” she sighed to herself, “when he thus turns into ridicule a serious and rational proposal for our mutual advantage?”

But then when she looked at him, such admiration, such affection beamed in his eyes, such a noble frankness sate upon his brow, that she could not but feel that he was sincere. Still she would have been better pleased had he been more serious, instead of replying as he did.

“A school, you think? a schoolmaster?—in other words, a ‘Caleb Quotem’? not only a scholar, but a master of scholars? It is a part I certainly have never yet acted, or even thought of trying. I only know my pupils would have a very pretty mistress to look after their puddings and pies.”

"I could do more than that," said Margaret playfully. "You do not know how clever I am. I have gone as far as fractions in arithmetic, and I could teach the rudiments of Latin. I have read Virgil and Horace with my father, and I am reading them again with Lucy."

"I am very glad to hear it," said the young man, with real respect in his manner. "No attainments could increase my love for you ; but every branch of knowledge is delightful, and ought to bring increase of happiness with it ; and then, languages are so fashionable ; for there is a fashion, my sweet Margaret, in everything."

"I know nothing of fashion," said Margaret, delighted to see his satisfaction ; "the death of my dear mother, and the straightness of our circumstances, prevented either Lucy or myself from cultivating the feminine accomplishments we should perhaps have best liked ; but all the solid information my dear father himself possesses, he has been indefatigable in imparting to us ; and therefore it was that I thought"—and again she hesitated, but she smiled also.

"We could keep a little school together," interrupted her lover, putting his arm fondly round her ; "and so we will, my Margaret. At any rate, it will enable us to educate our——"

"Hush !" said Margaret, escaping from him, "I hear the baby !" and she was out of the room in an instant. She returned, however, in a few minutes with the infant, and followed by Lucy, who, at her sister's request, had brought her work with her, and sate down to it with a determined air of industry that plainly informed the young man his *tête-à-tête* was at an end for that evening.

Still it was delicious to him to gaze on Margaret's slight, yet rounded form, as she glided about the room with her nurling in her arms ; to see him plunge his tiny fingers into the waving gold of her ringlets, and alternately reveal and shade her snowy neck as he hid his little face among them, or looked up into her face with the dawning of intelligence. In that gentle, noiseless step, that tender, patient smile, that low murmur of endearing words, all the most sacred attributes of woman were unconsciously revealed to him by her in their pristine beauty.

"How exquisite !" thought he, "to call such a lovely,

unsophisticated creature one's own ! To transplant all those modest virtues that have been nursed in poverty and seclusion into the warm atmosphere of refinement and indulgence, without fear of injuring their fragrance by heightening their bloom ! To be the chosen object at once of her duteous gratitude and her admiring love ! Yes ! if ever rank or fortune are to be envied, it is in the power they afford their possessor of following the dictates of his best feelings, his sweetest affections ! Yet, too often are they debased into the venal instruments of traffic, even in the most sacred things !” And so from poetry he was gliding into morality, when he was suddenly let down into a state of sober prose by Mr. Slender's thin face popping itself against the window, with as much of a smile upon it as the keen sleety wind, which had been blowing full against him for the last hour and a half, as he sate on the top of the “Phenomena,” had left his muscles the power to perform.

Pleasant it was to see the filial haste with which the good man was met by his daughters. Lucy flew to open the door, whilst Margaret, though encumbered with “the baby,” got his slippers for him, and drew his armchair closer to the fire, which she stirred into a cheering blaze ; then, when, after imprinting his paternal kiss on the brow of each of his girls, and shaking hands with his guest, he sate himself down, it was Lucy's office to unbutton his gaiters and take off his heavy shoes ; and as she knelt to do so, his hand rested on her dark-brown curls, and smoothed them as they fell over her ruddy cheek. The sight of such affection moved the young man : his heart swelled in his bosom, and he relieved his suffocating sensations in a bursting sigh, caught only by Margaret's ear, for her father was at that very moment expressing to his daughters his fears that his absence might have seemed long to them. Lucy glanced with a sly demureness at her sister, who exchanged a smile with her and with their visitor, but not a word was said.

And now came the whole history of the journey, and its happy termination, to the delight of the poor girls, who drank in every word with avidity ; and then followed the thanks of the good man to his young benefactor for the kindness of his intentions, intermingled with many an expression of gladness, that there was no occasion to call them into action.

"I could not have slept a night in peace, sir," said Mr. Slender, "if I had placed you in the very same situation that I felt so terrible for myself. No, no, my young friend, never make such an offer again. Remember the counsel of the Son of Sirach, which I myself, to my sorrow, neglected,

"He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it, and he that hateth suretyship is sure."

"But you are not a stranger, my dear sir," said the young man; "you are a valued, respected friend, to whom I look for the greatest happiness of my life." The curate smiled at this flight, which he thought savoured a little of hyperbole; but then, in a player, it was not to be wondered at. Margaret, however, crimsoned and turned away, so her father thought she was a little displeased at it, and he hastened to change the discourse.

"Draw your chair to the table, sir; you will take something with us."

"Thank you, sir, but I am expected at Cambridge. I wish I were not."

"I wish so too, sir."

"And so do I," said Lucy. Margaret looked down and said nothing.

"I am afraid you will have a stormy walk," continued Mr. Slender. "I hope you have an umbrella as well as a great-coat."

"I have a horse at the Roebuck. I shall be at Cambridge in less than half an hour.

"What! six miles in less than half an hour! A little too quick, that; remember, my young friend, 'a good man is merciful to his beast.' You will have the wind on your back, however, which is more than I had. I hope you will get safe home."

"Shall I come to-morrow to tell you whether I do or not?" asked the young man, holding out his hand to the curate, who pressed it kindly as he answered,—

"We are always happy to see you, when you can be spared from your—duties, I was going to say; but that is a term one cannot well apply to the profession you have chosen."

The young man laughed, and with a speaking glance at Margaret, and a playful reproach to Lucy, as she ran to open

the door, for being in a hurry to get quit of him, he took his leave. The curate and his daughters then sat down to their evening meal, including Lucy's cakes, hot out of the oven ; the incidents of the day were once more talked over, and, after they had offered up their grateful thanksgivings to the Author of their consolations, they retired to the sweet and happy rest, of which it may truly be said,—

“So he giveth his beloved sleep.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

THE nearer the time approaches for my quitting this place, so long my home, my secluded, tranquil, happy home, the more my reluctance to leave it increases. Nearly twenty years of my life I have spent in this village ; during that time I have seen an entire generation spring up around me ; they seem to me as my children. I have baptized them into the kingdom of the Lord ; I have admonished, rebuked, encouraged, consoled them. I have done my utmost to train them in the way of salvation, and now I am called upon to forsake them,—to abandon the care of my flock to another shepherd,—one whose voice the sheep know not, and who, though he may be equally zealous with myself—nay, even more so—yet cannot, all at once, look upon them with the eyes of habitual affection, any more than I can feel the same for the strangers among whom I may be cast, as for these my own neighbours and friends of so long standing.

Even the houses, the trees, the fields, the lanes, the very gates and stiles, to which I have been for so many years accustomed, appear to me as objects too familiar and dear to be parted with. My people, likewise, seem sincerely grieved at the thought of losing me, now that they find I am actually going to leave them. I believe they have always felt the sincerity of my attachment to them, and even the very circumstance of my lot being cast so lowly in outward

things, favoured, I doubt not, in many respects, my influence among them ; their confidence was not repelled by any great dissimilarity of condition between us. The humbler classes can never bring themselves to confide their infirmities and sorrows to the rich,—they cannot imagine it possible that they may find sympathy where such inequality exists ; to me they were not ashamed to complain of their privations and their trials : and many a time have I been enabled, with the aid of Divine grace, to act as physician to their souls, because they kept back no part of their spiritual diseases from me, out of distrust or false shame. Yes, my labours, humble as was their field, seemed blessed and acceptable ; and oh, how thankful should I have been had I been permitted to continue them ! Alas ! it is now that I see the sinfulness of my distrust of Providence. Had I relied upon His divine care, who numbers even the hairs of my head, I should never have complained to Doctor Pluffy of the smallness of my income. And then this eighty pounds a year, coming in so miraculously, as I may say, with this blessed babe, would have enabled me to sustain myself and my dear girls in comfort, and even in gentility. To be sure, it cannot last for ever ; but even a year or two—nay, six months—would give us time to look about us, and, at any rate, “sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.”

One thing I am sure of, that no evil could have come upon me, save the loss of my dear children, that could have afflicted me more than the being compelled to relinquish my ministerial duties. Affluence itself would be joyless to me if bought with the sacrifice of my sacred office. I have always loved my holy calling, and felt a fervent gratitude for being admitted among “a people separated, to stand before the Lord, to minister unto Him, and to bless in His name.”

My earliest wishes pointed towards it. I remember, as a child, getting into the copper, in the brewhouse, with my pinafore turned round, to make it look like a cassock, and trying my juvenile eloquence upon my brothers and sisters, in a little oration, which I endeavoured to make as like the sermon I had heard the Sunday before as my powers of recollection and imitation enabled me to do. As I advanced

from childhood into youth, my prayer was that of the royal Psalmist : " Lord, send me thy light, and Thy truth, that they may tend me, and bring me into Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles."

And when the time came which I had so ardently desired—the period for my ordination, to qualify me for which my dear parents had deprived themselves of many comforts—with what delight I used to ejaculate, in my retired walks, " I will wash my hands in innocency ; so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord ; that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works."

How happy I was, when I had preached my first sermon ! My dear mother wept for joy, and my father shook hands with me, when I came out of the pulpit, and told me he was proud of me. Yea, he was grateful that the Lord had heard my prayer, and brought me into His courts ; but, alas ! I have cast myself out of them, by my murmurings and distrust. Why, alas ! why did I make myself anxious about food and raiment ? Did I not believe the words of my blessed Master, " Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things ?" Could I not trust Him who clotheth the lilies, and without whose permission not even a sparrow falleth to the ground ? Now, behold, I have that given me of which I feared to be deprived, and I have that taken away from me which was the joy of my earthly existence. Had I been as faithful in hoping good as I have been ingenious in fearing evil, I should not now have keen self-reproach and bitter regret.

How often has my soul been delighted with the exquisite poetry and sublime spiritual meaning of the nineteenth Psalm, " The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want ;" yet I distrusted my Shepherd, when I fancied I heard the howl of the wolf, even though far off. Hence it is, that He casts me, unworthy, out of His fold, when He would otherwise have made me to " lie down in green pastures, and have led me beside the still waters."

I have felt more distressed than usual, perhaps, to-day, at the thought of leaving this my home, on account of a visit which I have had from my intended successor, the Reverend Mr. Snakegrass and his lady. They sent a note from the

Roebuck, to ask my permission to take a look at the premises, in order, I believe, to make some arrangements about their furniture. I went to them immediately, to assure them that they were perfectly welcome to make whatever survey they might think proper. I thought it more friendly to grant their request in person, than in writing. I owe no ill-will to Mr. Snakegrass, I feel none; why should I? If it had not been he, it would have been Mr. Somebody else; and no one can blame him for accepting a good that is offered to him—most likely he has no idea of the blow it is to me. He is, moreover, an agreeable man enough—perfectly civil—if anything, indeed, a little too obsequious. But then, I am accustomed only to the plain manners of my parishioners, who are certainly no flatterers. However, if he was over-polite, his wife equalized matters by her extra-stiffness, both of person and demeanour. Nothing in the house pleased her, though she scrutinized every trifling thing through her glass. As for my daughters, she passed and repassed them without vouchsafing them a word, until, seeing the baby in Margaret's arms, she said to her abruptly, "How old is your child? You look very young to be married." She might well think so, for she herself appears more than double Margaret's age. The poor girl, however, was covered with confusion at her question, and knew not what reply to make. I hastened to relieve her from her embarrassment, by stating that the baby was consigned to us to nurse. Mrs. Snakegrass listened to me with an air of incredulity, bit her lips, and before I had finished my little narration, turned from me to make some remark to her husband upon the disagreeableness of the windows not being made in the French fashion, so as to open upon the grass plot. I thought her manners out of place, but I said nothing. Mr. Snakegrass seems to give up to her in everything. We were glad when their visit was over. I asked them to take a cup of tea with us, but the lady informed me, somewhat disdainfully, that they never dined before seven; they then made me a formal speech of thanks, and took their leave. I felt sad after their departure. I seemed to see them in every corner of the house all the rest of the evening.

Margaret, too, was grave. I am sometimes uneasy about

her. She seems to me to have lost her spirits of late. Yet it is strange that she should be less cheerful, now that we are surrounded by comforts, than she was three months ago, when we were not sure of a dinner from day to day. Perhaps it is her anxiety for the infant—perhaps he disturbs her rest—yet she assures me he only wakes once in the night, when she gives him a little milk and water. She will sit silent and motionless by the cradle, hour after hour, and if we speak to her, she starts, and asks what it was that we said.

She grows thin, too. I know not what to think ! Alas ! What a grief it would be to me did I begin to see in her any indications of that insidious, that cruel, fatal malady which so early deprived me of her dear and sainted mother ! Ah ! how many trials are there a thousand times more difficult to bear than poverty ! In the midst of poverty there may always be hope ; but when the desire of our eyes is taken from us, what can we do but say with Job, " Have pity upon me, O my friends, have pity upon me, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me ? "

Sometimes I fancy Mr. Shirley may have made an impression upon her heart. Yet, in that case, I think she would have told me. She has never hitherto had any reserves with me—but then she so utterly dislikes his profession—at least, so she always tells me : it seems a constant subject of regret to her, whenever we speak of him. Still he is very engaging, and in her retired life it is natural for her to see his amiable points of character, which truly are many, in their most attractive light. We ought never to forget, as we grow old, that we have been young ; on the contrary, we ought continually to endeavour to recall the feelings of our own youth to mind, in order to judge kindly and considerately of the feelings of those who are in the morning, or noontide, of their existence. I should be very sorry if I could ever wound my Margaret's, either by inattention to them, or any ill-timed remark upon anything that might be connected with them. Then again—I cannot but be uneasy ; though I know how wrong it is in me, about both her and Lucy, if the dear babe be taken away from us, as in all probability he will be, in a few months, at the farthest, and I ejected from my present home, having no other

wherein to shelter them. There are in England and Wales 14,077 churches ; of these, only 72 have services performed in them three times on the Sabbath ; 470 only once. How thankful should I be to undertake the other two in any of them, even for the stipend at which I have dared to murmur. There is at this moment in the Church of England the son of one of our highest dignitaries whose income from church and other preferments is £14,136. 6s. 6d., of which £10,894. 6s. 6d. arises from a sinecure office, the rest in various livings, with what is termed "suitable houses," including the presentation to one living, and a share in the patronage of thirty-four others. Surely, among them all, some must be in want of a curate—but am I not falling into the very error of anxiety and mistrust that I have just been condemning in myself?

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself ; it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RECOGNITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS.

MR. SLENDER was sitting one morning at his desk, writing his sermon for the following Sunday. The good man could easily abstract himself from surrounding objects ; nevertheless his attention was not so entirely taken up with his subject as to neglect Lucy's prosody, whilst she was reading a portion of Virgil's "Georgics" to her sister, whose fingers were employed in frilling the baby's caps, whilst her foot, gently poised upon his cradle, gave it an undulating motion that seemed to have a very happy effect in prolonging his slumbers.

It was a pretty scene of domestic quiet, and Margaret's countenance beamed with placid contentment ; though, to say the truth, it seemed that her thoughts were not entirely fixed upon Lucy's lesson, for sometimes a smile, no way called forth by anything connected with it—a smile of ineffable tenderness—flitted across her lip ; and sometimes something very like a sigh would give a slight swell to her bosom. Once it was audible enough to reach Lucy's ear ; but

then, again, she thought it must be fancy, for what could Margaret have to sigh for, now that they were all so happy?

A knock at the door interrupted the reading—it was the postman's knock. Up jumped Lucy, down went the book. Now, I have often thought that I had much rather be a postman than a tax-gatherer: to the one the door is always opened with a smile; the other sees it ready to be shut in his face again, almost without an answer. It seems as if the postman had some peculiar organization of his finger-ends, which communicated a sort of nervous sympathy to the ears, for his knock is always sooner heard, as well as more quickly attended to, than that of any other person.

"From Barnwell," said Mr. Slender, looking at the postmark; "from Mr. Shirley," he added, as he glanced at the signature. Margaret felt her cheeks glow, she kept her eyes upon her work, but Lucy fixed hers on her father's face with inquiring eagerness. To her surprise, she saw the smile with which he had begun the letter change into an expression she had never seen before in him.

"What does Mr. Shirley mean," said he, "by writing in this manner to me?"

Margaret's heart throbbed loud enough to make itself heard. She had a vague perception of being in some way implicated in the letter, and the idea of incurring her father's displeasure, through it, was as new as it was dreadful to her.

"Read this, my child," said he, putting it into her hand; "perhaps I am too hasty."

"Reverend sir," Margaret falteringly began,—*"I shall have the honour of waiting upon you to-morrow morning,"*—"that is, to-day," interrupted Lucy,—*"in order to procure a license for me to enact the part of 'Benedict the married man.' As the friends of the young lady who honours me by her choice are illiberal enough to object to my profession, I should wish the marriage ceremony to be as private——"*

Here the letter dropped from Margaret's hand, for she had fainted. Lucy shrieked, and caught her before she fell on the floor. The poor father flew to her aid. *"My Margaret, my dear child!"* he exclaimed; and, humanized by the image of death her pale face and closed eyes placed before him, his tears dropped upon her forehead.

"She is cold!" exclaimed Lucy, wildly; "she is stiff; she is dying!"

"Good God! what do I hear! what do I see!" exclaimed a voice of agony. The father looked up. It was that of the young man who of late he had learned to consider almost as his son. He had twice knocked unheard, and had entered unperceived. He knelt, and, taking Margaret's hand, pressed it repeatedly to his lips and breast.

"How long has she been ill?" he asked. "What has brought her into this state?"

"Ask your own conscience," sir, said Mr. Slender, sternly. "Your duplicity."

"Duplicity!" repeated the young man, indignantly.

"Yes, sir,—duplicity. You are not what I took you for."

The young man's face and forehead were in an instant suffused with the deepest crimson. "I acknowledge," said he in a humble tone, "that I have practised some deception in my acquaintance with you, but it was an innocent one."

"Innocent! sir,—but no matter; a person capable of conduct like yours is incapable of seeing its baseness. Thank God! she is reviving."

And, indeed, her poor heart had sent its blood back again to her cheek, as she heard, though indistinctly, as in a dream, the language of reproach, so unusual from her father's lips, addressed to one whose fond pressure thrilled through her breast, even whilst she still kept her eyes closed, for fear of beholding him. Lucy, overpowered with this sign of returning animation, burst into tears, and sobbed as if her heart would break, whilst she kissed her sister over and over again, and called her, her "dear, dear Margaret!"

With the help of vinegar and a current of air Margaret gradually recovered herself, and, with a smile all the sweeter for the melancholy which was blended with it, put her hand into her father's, and then turned towards the young man, as if to welcome him as usual. But he was so damped with the unexpected and severe terms of reprobation with which Mr. Slender had received him that he could scarcely give utterance to a word.

"How is it, sir," at length he said, "that I have been so unfortunate as to offend you?"

"It is wonderful to me, sir," said the curate, a little more

calmly, for anger could never find long resting-place in his bosom, "that you should not see the impropriety, even viewing it in that light only, of your addressing yourself to me, a parent myself, and whose duty it is, as a minister, to teach parental obedience, on the subject of a clandestine marriage."

"A clandestine marriage!" re-echoed the young man. "What injustice you do me! No, sir, never did such an idea enter my head for one instant. Never could I have thought of insulting your daughter by such a proposition, even had I desired it for myself; but it was a thing the furthest from my wishes. She knows, on the contrary, how often I have entreated her to let me lay my proposals before you."

Margaret drooped her head on her father's shoulder, overcome by this sudden revelation of the only secret she had ever had with him.

"Then, sir, if you have taken advantage of my unsuspecting welcome, my prepossession—if I must own it, in your favour, to gain the affections of my daughter, as by your own acknowledgment you have done, where was your humanity, as well as your honour, when you wrote the letter which reduced her to the state you found her in?"

"Nay, my dear father," said Margaret, beseechingly, "I felt faint before you asked me to read the letter."

"Yes, my poor child, when you saw the disgust with which I read it."

"There must be some great mistake, sir, some very great misunderstanding."

"There is no mistaking, sir, no misunderstanding a matter so plainly expressed. In this letter you tell me you want a license."

The young man could not help laughing.

"Too happy should I be, dear sir," said he, "if I were authorized by your sweet Margaret to solicit your good offices this very day; but assuredly that letter is not from me, and I am utterly ignorant to whom it can refer."

"How is it then," said the good curate, his indignation gradually losing itself in wonder, "that the letter is dated 'Barnwell,' and signed with your own name, Francis Shirley?"

The young man coloured again, up to his very temples.

Margaret turned her head away, that she might not seem to witness his confusion ; nevertheless, he took Mr. Slender by the hand with an ingenuousness that could not but disarm distrust."

"Will you forgive me, sir," he said, "if I say that my name is not Shirley?"

Margaret started.

"Not Shirley?" exclaimed the curate. "Then, sir, I suppose, as I have been mistaken in one respect, I may be in another ; perhaps you are not a player?"

"I certainly am not a player, sir, nor ever was one, and most certainly never shall be," answered the young man, with a smile that shot through Margaret's heart as effectually as her radiant rejoicing glance did through his.

"Well, Mr. Shirley, or rather, not Mr. Shirley," said the good man, greatly relieved by this assurance, "I most sincerely congratulate you that, at any rate, you are not a player ; it was your only disadvantage in my eyes. As to your name, I am sorry it is not your own, because I have loved you by it."

How Margaret loved her father for saying so ! Her eyes shone through her tears as she looked at him, and her lover pressed his hand with as much respect as gratitude.

"I am sorry, too, on another account," continued Mr. Slender, in a tone of affectionate exhortation : "the borrowing, or assuming any other name than one's own has always in it something disgraceful and dangerous ; it is in some degree a forgery. Disguise of any sort is a breaking down of the bulwarks of integrity, and he who practises it at first in jest may be tempted to do so again in earnest, even to the injury of another, whenever an occasion may occur of what he may deem sufficient emergency to excuse him to himself."

"Spare me, sir, I entreat you," said the young man ; "it is the only action of my life which I am ashamed to think of. When I recollect, too, how I imposed upon your compassion, your generosity ——"

"Nay, my young friend, that is nothing. The trifle that I assisted you with, I should have had just as much pleasure in lending you in your own name, whatever it may be, which I have yet to learn, as in that of Mr. Shirley, whoever he

may be, or of anybody else." Here the young man smiled to himself. "And, indeed, it was hardly fair in you to make this Mr. Shirley, if there really be such a person in existence, an imaginary debtor, even for so small a sum, to one whom in all probability he has never either seen or heard of."

"Oh, as for him, my conscience does not accuse me ; true, I assumed his name, but it was with his own consent. The fact is, that, from peculiar circumstances, I am acquainted with him, I may say, intimately. I met him by accident, one morning, when he told me he was going to Creykedale to see if he could, to use his own expression, get up a *bespeak* for his benefit."

Here Lucy opened her eyes wider, and looked alternately at her papa and Margaret, to see if they understood what a *bespeak* meant—and to get it up, too ! How ! What was getting up ? It must be a strange thing, a *bespeak* ! And how could it be for a person's benefit ? What was to be got by it ? A *bespeak* ! What could it be ?

The young man saw her wonder, and smiled, while she, with gravity, "well counterfeited," hid her answering smile among her dark ringlets as she stooped down to look into the cradle.

After some little hesitation the young man continued.

"I had a particular reason for wishing to become acquainted with Mr. Slender, and with his daughters. A young lady whose honour is inexpressibly dear to me might, I thought, require—but I will not enter, now, into more explanation than is necessary." Margaret felt as if a globe were rising in her throat, and bent over the little Henry, who, at that instant, with his long brown eyelashes, and a slight curve of the lip, caused by some fairy dream, showed more resemblance than ever to him whom she had known and loved under the name of Shirley, and now loved without a name. "I had heard enough of you, sir," he continued, "to believe that you would not turn a deaf ear to a tale of need. It was therefore that I feigned one, as a means of introducing myself to you ; but my heart reproached me when I saw how readily your compassion brought you to me, how unsuspectingly you returned confidence for confidence, how kindly you endeavoured to console me under my imagined difficulties, even when you were requiring

consolation under your own ; but when I saw your daughter, your dear Margaret"—and here with lover's ardour he seized her hand and gave her a long look of unutterable fondness,—“when *she* came, on her errand of mercy, into the little parlour, at the ‘Roebuck,’ when I saw her timid blushes contending with her sweet smile of encouragement, when I saw her eyes suffused with tears of sympathy, and felt that it was only her lovely native modesty that prevented her from following the generous impulse of her nature, and, putting her hand into mine, to encourage me under the griefs her imagination painted to her, then my heart bounded within me ; for I felt that I had found my counterpart, the dear, the cherished companion of my future days on earth, the friend, the partner of my soul throughout eternity !” His emotion was too great to permit him to proceed. Margaret, overwhelmed with mingled delight and bashfulness at hearing from him such a vivid transcript of her own feelings, sunk down upon her knees, beside the cradle, and hid her face in the coverlet under which the soft breathings of infant innocence blended themselves with the loud throbbings of her heart. Lucy, leaning upon her father's shoulder, gazed alternately at her sister, and on the lover of that sister, with intense interest and sympathizing affection, which flushed her cheek and filled her eyes with drops, through which they shone like stars.

Mr. Slender, his pale cheek glowing for an instant with honest pride at this panegyric on his daughter, thought it best to check the sensibility which was becoming painful.

“I understand you exactly, sir,” said he. “I might have foreseen what has happened : perhaps I am glad I did not. The only thing now to consider is—that is to say, if I comprehend aright that you and Margaret have selected each other as the friend and companion of the remainder of your pilgrimage here below—in that case, the only thing that remains to be considered is simply, what can we do for the best ? You are evidently not rich—nay, do not interrupt me ; poverty is no crime, Heaven knows, in my eyes—I was only going to say you are not rich, and I am very poor ; but, at any rate, thank Heaven you are not a player. Not that I am illiberal enough to annex censure to any individual merely on account of his employment, whatever it may be,

provided it be an honest one; still, there are few callings less desirable, in the present day, at any rate, than that of a player. May I ask if there be any other to which you have turned your attention, as a means of subsistence?" The young man hesitated, and seemed to reflect upon the matter, as if it had never before entered his head. At last he said, "Margaret proposed our keeping a school," and a smile that he strove in vain to restrain broke through the gravity with which he spoke.

"Did she?" said Mr. Slender; "it was very provident in her." He said so with the utmost simplicity, and in the tone of his voice there was nothing of sarcasm or displeasure; but poor Margaret's cheek glowed against the baby's, whilst she listened to this too frank—as she at that moment thought it—avowal of her lover, that she had been the first to form plans for their future arrangements; and that, too, without having consulted her father on the subject; but that good father was so seldom thinking of himself that he saw nothing but what was commendable in her suggestion. "Nay, my dear," he continued, "you need not blush at having thought of a thing in which I flatter myself you could be of considerable assistance. Now, sir, if you had been at either of the universities you would have found it a great advantage in such a line of life, the world is so taken by names. Even now it is all in good time, if you are fortunate enough to have any friends who can lend you a helping hand. There was a time, once in my life, when on an emergency I could have assisted a young man like you with twenty or even thirty pounds; but that is many a long year ago; one thing, however, the very poorest can give, and that is advice. Now, mine to you is, that you should enter yourself at St. John's or Magdalen's as a sizer;—you colour, my dear sir, but it is a virtuous and honourable thing, expressly intended by the virtuous and honourable and excellent founders for the benefit of young men like yourself—more gifted, if I mistake not, by nature than fortune."

"You do me injustice, my dear sir," interrupted the young man, "if you imagine I coloured from any such unworthy feeling of false shame. The fact is, I was just going to tell you that I have had something of an university education."

"You have! why, bless me! I wondered how you came

to be so apt with your classical quotations. I am very glad of it, however, for that will shorten matters much. You have only, then, to find some fair field for turning your acquirements to account; and if in a few years you see a reasonable prospect of success ——”

“A few years!” exclaimed the young man. “Ah, sir, if I had to wait a few years—nay, one year, I should be coming to you every day for a lesson on patience, instead of minding my business,” and he took Margaret’s hand, and kissed it with an ardent gaiety that seemed to set time and mischance at defiance.

“My young friend,” said Mr. Slender, seriously, though affectionately, “imprudence is incompatible with true love. My Margaret is her mother’s image, and inherits her mother’s virtues. Ten years did that departed saint wait for me, her faithful, though unworthy suitor. Twelve years of angelic happiness I passed with her beneath this humble ——”

Poor Mr. Slender’s voice failed him; he turned his face towards the window, and at that instant he saw a lady and gentleman walking up to the house.

“Oh!” cried Lucy, “here are the lady and gentleman that came to church, and dined with us, before Christmas.”

“Let me get out of the way,” said the young man, looking towards the door.

“Oh, stay,” said Margaret; “you will like the lady so much!” and she ran to meet her.

“I rather think I shall,” said he, with a peculiar sort of smile, after having glanced at her between the geraniums. The minute after she entered with her husband; she looked at no one, spoke to no one, but flying up to the cradle exclaimed, “Where is he? where is my child?” then seizing the little Henry, she clasped him to her breast with an hysteric laugh, and then burst into a passion of tears, and laughed and cried by turns, whilst her husband, kissing her and the baby alternately, besought her to compose herself.

“What can Mr. Slender think of us, my dear Julia,” said he,—“and these young ladies!”

“*And I!*” said the late Mr. Shirley, stepping forth from the bow-window, where he had ensconced himself among the plants.

"Ah, Courtney, you here?" exclaimed the gentleman, giving him his hand.—"Oh, Clement! how glad I am!" exclaimed the lady, offering him her pretty mouth to kiss. "Well, really, I am ashamed of myself, but it is all this darling's fault," and then she devoured the little one with kisses. "Oh, Mr. Slender, how much we are obliged to you for receiving him. My dear Miss Slender—Margaret, how shall we ever repay you for your care of him; and your sister too,"—holding out her hand to Lucy, whilst her husband was making his apologies and his explanations in a corner to Mr. Slender. At last he came forward: "Courtney," said he, "we ought to have no disguise with Mr. Slender."

"No," said Courtney, with some little embarrassment, recalling the disguise he himself had already practised, and hearing his own name thus again proclaimed; "permit me, Mr. Slender, to introduce to you my brother-in-law, Lord Orville, and Lady Orville, my dear and only sister."

"And permit me to return the service," said Lord Orville, laughingly, "by announcing this talented gentleman as Mr. Courtney, of——"

"Enough!" said Clement, pressing Lord Orville's arm; "no need of anything more. Mr. Slender and I are old acquaintances."

Mr. Slender cordially extended his hands to the young couple, and the welcome went round; Lady Orville, affectionately kissing both Margaret and Lucy, said to them, "We must be as sisters for the future: never can I repay you for your attention to my sweet babe; it was your dear father that baptised it!"—and then she kissed it, and held it up, and gazed on its tiny features with fresh delight.

"How well he looks! how beautiful!" said she to Margaret. "We think him so like my brother!"—and then Margaret kissed the baby, and looked at him as earnestly as if she had never seen him before.

"Did I not tell you," said Lucy, "he was like Mr. Shir——" She checked herself, and coloured, but her slip of the tongue escaped notice amid the general bustle. The gentlemen went to take a turn in the paddock, to give Courtney the opportunity of entering into further explanations to Mr. Slender, whilst Lady Orville, the vivacity of whose pretty countenance was somewhat changed by an ex-

pression of seriousness added to that of delicate health, continued her discourse in a more confidential tone.

"My dear Margaret," said she, taking her hand—"you will let me call you Margaret, will you not?—well then, my dear Margaret, I will have no secrets from you; Clement tells me I need not; and my husband wishes you to know everything. His father, the Earl of Maltravers, does not yet know of our marriage,"—and here her cheek was for a moment painted with the bright vermilion which it had not recovered since her confinement; "he would not have liked his son to marry so young; and we were foolish, and could not bear the idea of being separated, we were so fond of each other; and we are so happy! My only trouble has been in being obliged to part with my babe; but I could not nurse him myself; but then I was so thankful to think that he was with you,—how kind it was in Clement! it was he who advised us to send him here; we ought to have written to ask your leave, but we were so afraid of the Earl of Maltravers getting to hear of the darling being born. Poor Clement was sadly hurt at our being obliged to keep everything so secret; and I was very miserable whilst I thought he was angry with me." And her pretty lip quivered, but she went on. "And now we are going to Maltravers Hall—at least Lord Orville is, for we have had a letter this morning to tell us that the Earl is very ill;—and I shall go to old Mr. Shirley's"—Margaret's countenance betrayed the interest she still took in the name,—“and wait for him; it is only two miles from the Hall, a sweet retired spot, where I shall be quite safe: I have been there before; but, alas! I dare not take my darling with me; it cannot, however, be more than a few weeks now before we shall be able to acknowledge him.”

Whilst Margaret was consoling her by every affectionate argument she could think of, the gentlemen returned. Lord Orville flew to his Julia's side, and they mingled their caresses of the baby together. At last he said, "Now, my dear Julia, I grieve to hurry you, but ——"

"The case admits of no delay," said her brother; "Julia would never forgive herself if ——"

"I know—I promised!" said she, rising as she spoke, with the baby in her arms.

"If I were to stay a week, the moment of parting with him would be just as painful."

So, with tears in her eyes and smiles upon her lips, she delivered her treasure back into Margaret's keeping, and, in a few minutes after, she found herself, with her husband, on the road towards Maltravers Hall, posting it from stage to stage on the good old-fashioned turnpike roads, which now seem to exist only in tradition.

To the departure of the young couple succeeded a silence and embarrassment which showed that none of the little party they had left felt at ease. Mr. Slender's character was one of openness and simplicity : he had neither ambition nor vanity in his nature ; he grieved over his extreme poverty, because it seemed hopeless, and perpetually interfered with the dictates of his warm heart and generous and social disposition ; but dignities, merely as such, he neither desired for himself nor envied in others ; and if he had had a couple of hundred a year, in the humble spot endeared to him as the scene of his sacred duties and his domestic happiness, his wishes would never have strayed among rectories and deaneries of higher value, still less among lawn sleeves and mitres ; though he sufficiently honoured and respected those to whom they fell, provided they acquitted themselves of the duties connected with them. With such a frame of mind, it was not likely that he should feel otherwise than grieved and uneasy at the mystification that had been practised upon him ; and he could not but acknowledge to himself that his young friend had been more dear to him as the poor player, affectionate and true, than as what he felt him to be at that moment, a young man of high connections, and most likely of fashionable habits, who had sought his acquaintance out of whim, and might have been led on to continue it from the basest motives. The poor curate's veins swelled on his temples at the thought—his heart seemed too big for its biding-place. Margaret did not see his troubled aspect, for her eyes were bent upon the babe, whom she was hushing to sleep upon her bosom ; but Lucy did, though she durst not attempt to soothe him, for fear of drawing attention to his agitation ; and she pondered over the events of the morning in silence and gravity, both equally unusual with her.

Clement, justly feeling himself to be the cause of the chilling change of the social atmosphere in which his best affections had been warmed and nursed, was thoroughly uncomfortable. He had, indeed, as he had truly told Mr. Slender, loved Margaret from the first moment of his beholding her ; he had since loved her more and more, every day of his existence, for herself alone, and nothing could satisfy the cravings of his soul but to be loved by her with the same entireness of affection and confidence.

"You must forgive me, my dear sir," said he, taking the curate's hand with an air of humility, at once deprecating and affectionate, "for the deception I have practised towards you ; but it was so sweet to me to be received into your family without any of the cold restraints of ceremony : I fancied the difference in our circumstances, though nothing of importance—(ah, Clement ! Mr. Slender was right when he said that the path of deception once entered is sure to be trodden again, whenever circumstance or motive tempt towards it),—might, had you been aware of it, have made some difference in your reception of me."

"Certainly, sir !" Mr. Slender began, but Clement hastily continued.

"Might—I know not how to express myself—have—in short, I do not ——"

"I understand you, sir," interrupted Mr. Slender, mildly ; "you wished to win Margaret's affections ; win them"—(here a passionate gesture from Margaret endeavoured to interrupt him)—"honourably, I mean for, from all that I have seen in you, I cannot bring myself to imagine otherwise ; win them without restraint or bias on her part. You did wisely, therefore, as far as your own considerations were concerned, to conceal from us your position in society, and the vast superiority of it over our own. I had scruples of conscience against admitting you within my doors, upon terms of intimacy, as Mr. Shirley the player ; but most assuredly as Mr. Courtney, the brother of a nobleman ——"
——"Not brother, only brother-in-law," interrupted Courtney
——"they would never have been opened to you at all."

"See then, dear sir," said Courtney, his wonted animation revisiting his features, "what, by your own confession, I have escaped ! Surely I was right in not mentioning anything

that might have impeded the growth of that friendship between us to which I feel assured time will only add new ties. And, after all, what is the great difference in our position? I have a little land—(ah, Clement! again),—enough for all I require, and you have a sacred and honourable calling, which, in itself, would give you precedence over me. As to Lord Orville, my sister's marriage with him has been to me a subject neither of pride nor pleasure, but, on the contrary, of the deepest anxiety and mortification: it was a match very far above her own condition, or anything that I should ever have desired for her; and has been attended by many circumstances extremely painful and humiliating to me to recall."

Margaret could not bear to see a cloud upon her lover's brow.

"My dear father," said she, "you must forgive Mr. Shirley—Mr. Courtney, I mean,—indeed, I scarcely know what to call him."

"Call me Clement, my beloved Margaret!—your own devoted Clement. Oh, sir! permit me to hope that you will not revoke the consent you have already given to my union with your daughter,—that you will allow me to dedicate the remainder of my life to her happiness, and your comfort,—to be a son to you, and a brother to your dear Lucy."

Mr. Slender's eyes glistened. Margaret's were cast down, but the crimson on her cheek, and the fluttering of her heart sufficiently betrayed the anxiety with which she waited for his reply.

"My dear young friend," he said, extending his hand to him, "you know very well without my telling you, the prepossession I felt in your favour, from the first moment of our acquaintance. You are in my eyes, as far as I have the means of forming a judgment, everything that I could desire in a son-in-law; but when so serious a thing as my daughter's happiness for life is concerned, I must have that judgment confirmed by persons of respectability, who have known you longer and more intimately than I have done: doubtless there are some such to whom you can refer me."

"A hundred!" exclaimed Courtney, but he checked himself, for he still did not wish to throw more light than was

actually necessary for the time being on his fortune and standing. He considered a moment, in which brief pause the words, "my banker," "my solicitor," half escaped from his lips, and then he went on. "Perhaps, sir, you will favour me with writing yourself, this very evening, to Doctor Jackson, the clergyman of my parish ; I will give you his address. He is a venerable old man, as worthy and as much respected as yourself ; he joined my parents in wedlock, and baptised me and my sister—so he has known me long enough to know me as I am. Then there is Mr. Wilson, of Norwich, of whom you know something yourself : he has sometimes had the management of my money matters—no great thing—(oh, Clement!),—but from the two parties together, you will, I doubt not, receive such information respecting myself and my little property as will fully satisfy a mind so liberal and desires so moderate as your own."

And Clement, at the moment he was speaking, resolved to write by the very same post to the worthy gentlemen referred to, and beg them to say the *truth*, and *nothing but* the truth, but by no means the *whole truth*,—on the contrary, to represent the pecuniary part of the question, and the local importance of the representative of the ancient house of Courtney in terms as guarded and as moderate as might be likely to be received without awakening doubts of their exactitude.

Mr. Slender, little imagining what was passing in Courtney's mind, felt his confidence in him revive, by the manner in which he had expressed himself, and replied, with unsuspecting frankness,—“As for fortune, if I had money to give my daughter, you should have it ; but she will bring you what is far better, nay, the most precious gift of the Lord, and that is, a meek and quiet spirit. It is her heritage from her mother, who was favoured with it in a degree I have never seen equalled in any other human being. The very remembrance of her virtues, even now, deprived, alas ! of them as I am, makes earth a paradise to me. The last two years of our blessed union were saddened by her illness, and by trials that I dwell upon no more, because she is beyond the reach of further suffering.”

He paused—his heart was full. Lucy kissed his forehead ; Margaret's eyes swam in tears, as she listened to this

enlogium on her mother, whose saintlike virtues were ever present to her memory ; and Courtney's breast swelled with respect and sympathy for the poor widower. Just such had been the love between his own parents ; just such the grief of *his* father when bereaved of his wife. But their affections had been fostered in the possession of every luxury, and the participation of every refined delight. The poor curate's and his wife's were born in a state of dependence, nurtured on hopes long deferred, strengthened by difficulties confronted together and cemented by fruits brought forth in poverty, and what would have been deemed disappointment, by minds less humble, less duteous, less submissive to the decrees of their Heavenly Father.

Nevertheless, the love that can maintain its strength and preserve its purity undiminished in the enervating atmosphere of unclouded luxury implies a root as deep as that which lifts its head undismayed against the tempest, and seems to gather fresh force and courage from the storms of adversity. One thing is certain, that under whatever aspect it may be found, under whatever circumstances nourished, true love is the nurse of every virtue, the source of every happiness. So Courtney felt, as he looked upon the little circle around him, and thought what pure delight it would be to contribute to the happiness of so much worth. To render his Margaret happy ; to study and gratify all her wishes ; to see her father love him as a son—her sister as a brother ; to see his own sister love them too, and be all the better for their sweet society ; to make a proper use of the blessings of his own lot, so as to be able to render up his account as a good and faithful servant to his Divine Master ;—such were his wishes ; and when were wishes based on virtue, and brought into action with sincerity and a humble trust in the blessing of the Almighty Giver of all Good, ever formed in vain ?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A RETROSPECT.

WE closed our last chapter very abruptly, dear readers ; but sooth to say, we thought you would all of you easily imagine whatever we could tell you as to the remainder of the scene we had begun to describe ; and, moreover, we were impatient to make you acquainted with the principal sources of some of the mysteries which have no doubt awakened various conjectures among you in this our eventful history.

Lord Orville's father, the Earl of Maltravers, had married somewhat late in life, in the laudable hope of having a son and heir, a lady young enough to be his daughter. His anticipated blessing was, however, withheld from him year after year, until he saw himself fast falling into "the sere and yellow leaf," and when it was at last granted to him, it came in a somewhat questionable shape, for the same day that made him a father, saw him also a widower.

Naturally proud and unsocial in his habits, cold and narrow in his affections, all that the earl had ever had of love in his temperament he had bestowed upon his wife ; he now concentrated it with double force upon the child she had left him, the sole prop of his old age, the sole tie that seemed still to connect him with the world, from which he had secluded himself for the last twenty years, in consequence of a political pique.

The heir grew and prospered : healthy, lively, intelligent, and blest by nature with sweetness of temper, he might have been everything a wise parent could desire ; but the earl was not a wise parent ; he was scarcely a fond one, and even that only in his own way. He could not bear to have the boy long out of his sight ; yet, when he was in it he soon grew weary of the overflow of his animal spirits, and the redundancy of his interrogations. To send him to a public school was out of the question with the old lord ; to learn his lessons all alone, whilst Frank Shirley was climbing trees like a squirrel, or scouring the fields like a greyhound, was equally out of question with the young one. Frank Shirley was the son of the earl's steward, whose wife had supplied to the infant Henry, Baron Orville, the nutriment of which he was

deprived by the death of his mother ; and, by the tenderest care of him during his infancy, had equally conciliated his young affections, and ensured the gratitude of the earl himself.

Frank Shirley, though three years the senior of the little lord, had been his constant associate and playfellow from the first day he could run alone. The difference in their ages counterbalanced the difference in their rank. Frank did not tyrannize over his junior as boys general do, because he was naturally a good-natured fellow, and, moreover, his junior was his young lord, and would be, in all probability, his future master. And the young lord did not give himself the airs over Frank that little lords have been accustomed to assume over their inferiors ever since the race began, because, in the first place, his disposition was too generous for him to admit the idea that there was any essential difference between them, and in the next Frank was the biggest and the strongest, and could leap the highest, and run the fastest, and could lend him a good stalwart arm whenever a brook was to be forded, or a wall scaled, in any of the excursions beyond bound in which they early began to find their greatest delight. So at last it was settled that as Lord Orville could not play without Frank Shirley, and would not learn without him, Frank must share his lessons as well as his pastimes ; and the same tutor was accordingly appointed for both.

Shakespeare has advanced, as a general axiom, that—

“Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits.”

These youths, however, were anything but home-keeping, and had, by the natural converse of the proposition, anything but homely wits. The solemn state and monotonous dullness of Maltravers Hall, the formality and length of the meals, rarely enlivened by the presence of a guest, the taciturnity of the earl, became more and more irksome to the young lord as he advanced nearer and nearer towards adolescence. His first escapes were from the stately abode of his forefathers to the cheerful dwelling of the steward, where the happiest days of his childhood had been spent, and where affectionate welcome, good humour, and sociability always awaited him. But Mr. Shirley was too conscientious a man, and, moreover, too prudent, with respect to his own interests, to encourage these visits as Lord Orville grew up ; for he

saw clearly enough that it was not by familiarity with his inferiors, and freedom from all restraint in youth, that the manhood of the future Earl of Maltravers could be expected to turn out such as to reflect honour upon his long line of ancestors and his extensive possessions.

The boys, therefore, gradually got into the way of extending their search after fun and frolic beyond their own immediate neighbourhood ; and unfortunately everything conspired to favour their erratic inclinations. The gout, added to the feebleness incidental to advancing age, confined the earl much to his room ; when he missed his son, he was told he had gone to Mr. Shirley's ; and when Mr. Shirley missed his son, he was told he had gone to the Hall, to which he could make no objection whatsoever. Mr. Dole'em, the tutor, reported favourably of both his pupils, to their respective parents, and indeed he, "good, easy man," was of so pacific and reasonable a nature that as long as he saw a good dinner served up regularly to him at the appointed hour, and could enjoy an uninterrupted reverie upon it, with closed eyes, for a couple of hours after he had discussed it, he saw very little in this nether world worth a wise man's troubling his head about.

Happily, Frank Shirley, though full of what is commonly termed mischief, had not a grain of vice in his composition. He could bring down his bird, but he hated a *battue* ; he could ride a steeple-chase as well as his betters ; but winning money upon it formed no part of his pleasure ; indeed, gambling of any kind, smoking, drinking, profane language, or vulgar habits of any description, were not to his taste. He would wake all the village, when he was returning late from the Hall, with crowing like chanticleer, or hooting like the owl. He would rouse all the dogs in the neighbourhood to "bay the moon," by his perfect echo of the long bark of the faithful guardian of his own gate, and so exactly could he imitate the cry and flutter and choking chuckle of an unfortunate hen, pulled from her roost by the stealthy fox, or the still more stealthy gipsy pilferer, that many a time and oft, he had leant against the side of some cottage wall, to give vent to his laughter, whilst the good man and his wife were sallying forth in their nightcaps, armed with poker and lanthorn, to scare away the thieves, or ascertain the damage done.

But his gaiety, his good-humour, and the thoughtless generosity with which he threw his father's money about him, secured him ready forgiveness for his freaks and fancies; his talent for imitation seemed to grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength; and he seized the singular and the ridiculous with such readiness that not an oddity escaped him; from the mountebank to the itinerant preacher, the showman at a fair to the sleepy sleekness of Mr. Dole'em, or even to the solemn stateliness of the earl himself, all were shown up in their turns, and peals of laughter attested the fidelity of his representations.

This aptitude

"To catch the manners living as they rise,"

naturally gave birth, in Frank Shirley, to a passion for dramatic representations; from the indulgence of which passion, whenever he could find opportunity for its gratification, resulted, as naturally, that desire to play a part in them himself, to which our readers are indebted, at a later period of his ripening talent, for the pleasure of an introduction to him in this our "ryghte pleasaunte and faythfull historie."

That Frank Shirley should imbue Lord Orville with all his own tastes, and initiate him into all his own pursuits, was the unavoidable consequence of that young nobleman's seclusion from other associates. But, at length, even the supineness of Mr. Dole'em was roused, partly by the irregularity of his pupil's hours, because he did not like to be kept up waiting for him, and partly because it began to strike him that if the earl were to take it into his head to ask unexpectedly for his son, it might appear somewhat remiss if he, the Reverend Mr. Dole'em, should not be able to inform him where his lordship was, or what he might be about. He, therefore, so far assumed the dignity of his office of preceptor as to inquire, in somewhat of an authoritative tone, one evening when Henry was later even than usual, where he had been. The answer was forthcoming—"With Frank Shirley." "But, surely, Mr. Shirley's family does not keep such late hours as these?"

"Not generally; but we have been at the play."

"The play! What play?"

"The 'Beau's Stratagem,' and Frank says he should like to play 'Archer,' and I am to play 'Aimwell.'"

"Humph. And pray where are the players?"

"They are at York. You know it is not above ten or twelve miles off."

This time the "humph!" was mixed up with something of a groan.

"And have you been there before?"

"Oh yes! often. We were there three times last week: indeed, every night they performed."

"And I never knew anything about it!" and the alarmed preceptor groaned outright.

"You are not to blame, sir, for that," said his good-natured pupil. "Frank got me a horse, and another for himself; and he kept them both at the farrier's, on purpose that neither you nor his father might know anything about it."

Still Mr. Dole'em felt that he ought to have known about it; and, what was worse, that the earl ought to know how matters were going on before they went too far. So he dismissed his lordship to bed, and retired to his own, which was, that night, for a special wonder, the scene of his waking cogitations till daybreak; by that time he had made up his mind as to the footing on which he should place his recommendation to the earl that Lord Orville should transfer the scene of his studies to Cambridge, at the opening of the ensuing term. This matter settled to his own satisfaction, he turned over on his sleeping side, pulled the bedclothes comfortably over his shoulder, and five minutes after was dreaming that he was back again in his own college, celebrating the anniversary of the founder, over a fine haunch of venison, the savoury fumes of which came so home to his nostrils as actually to awaken him with their effects upon his olfactory nerves. But, lo! waking, as sleeping, he seemed to inhale them still, and looking up, he beheld Frank Shirley demurely standing at his bedside, holding a morsel of boiled Westphalia ham under his nose.

"I thought, sir," said he, with a most duteous aspect, "as it is so much later than we usually begin our lessons, that you might not be quite well, so I have brought you your breakfast."

And hereupon he cast a sly look towards the door, where Lord Orville was standing with his handkerchief crammed into his mouth ; but unable to resist the comic expression, he was forced to take flight to avoid startling his tutor by the burst of laughter which he gave vent to as soon as he was out of hearing.

The result of Mr. Dole'em's conversation with the earl was, that in consideration of the "surprising abilities" and "uncommon attainments" of Lord Orville, he was to be sent to college the following term ; and accordingly the following term did actually see him safely domiciled at Trinity as gentleman commoner, and consoled for the sudden interruption of his intimacy with Frank Shirley, by a daily increasing one with Clement Courtney, his fellow-collegian.

Under the friendly control which Clement Courtney's seniority in years gave him the right to assume over his young friend, Lord Orville's exuberances were so far kept within bounds that the earl was perfectly satisfied with Mr. Dole'em's account of him at the end of the term ; insomuch that he thought fit to display his gratitude to that reverend gentleman for the disinterestedness he had shown, in advising his pupil to be transferred from his own care to that of Alma-Mater, by presenting him to a valuable living, the duties of which were by no means so onerous as to interfere with his digestive faculties.

Clement invited Lord Orville to spend as much of the vocation with him as he could prevail upon the earl to allow him leave of absence for ; and the earl, still more pleased with the improvement in his son's deportment than with his progress in his studies—which, to say the truth, he did not think of much importance to a man of rank—had much rather that he should cultivate an acquaintance from which he had already derived so much benefit, than renew his boyish macy with Frank Shirley. After devoting a few days, therefore, to his father, Lord Orville saw himself the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Courtney ; and in a very few days more he felt with them as with near and dear relations, so completely was he at home in the social elegancies of their domestic circle. In this circle there was also an individual attraction to Lord Orville : an attraction which, the very first week of his arrival, outweighed, in his eyes, all the rest—and that

was Julia Courtney, his friend's only sister, and the first young lady with whom his lordship had ever been sojourning under the same roof. By all the laws alike of nature and romance, he was bound to fall speedily and deeply in love with her, and accordingly he did so. It would have been strange if, in a youth of eighteen, it had been otherwise, even had the object of his admiration been much less attractive than she really was.

Julia Courtney was indeed a pretty and most engaging creature ; small in stature, but formed with the grace and symmetry of a fairy ; her dark eyes sparkled from beneath a brow which had never known the contraction of a frown, and was shaded by a profusion of ringlets that would have been black as the raven's wing, but for a tinge of gold which gave warmth to their lustre. Her colour might have been deemed too vivid, had it not continually changed and mantled with every change in her feelings. A look of sweet and innocent surprise, at anything new to her artless mind ; a vivacity ever dimpling in smiles around the prettiest mouth and teeth imaginable, and often breaking out in that fascinating charm of youth, a clear and joyous laugh, which echoed through the gardens, or the shrubberies, the very clarion note of innocent happiness. The lightness of her tread, the affectionate endearment of her manner, the disinterestedness of her sentiments, and the mingled clearness of perception and simplicity of language with which she expressed all her thoughts, and gave way to all her feelings, showed her the very child of nature that had never known a sorrow herself, and never would see another suffer what she might have the means of averting. Born five years after her brother, when her parents had ceased to hope for any further addition to their happiness, in respect to children, she was, from her infancy, the delight, the darling, the plaything of the whole house. Every wish, every whim was granted to her, and had she not been blessed by nature with such sweetness of disposition, that she never, for a moment, pressed for anything that might be displeasing or inconvenient to others, it would have been impossible for her to have escaped becoming that torment to herself, and pest to every one around her—a spoiled child. As it was, she resembled a bird, tamed by caresses, fondling the hand that fed it ; often taking little flights, but

brought back in a moment by the slightest check of its silken thread.

The following vacation brought the same delights. Lord Orville spent half of it at Courtney House; Courtney returned his visit; the earl was courteous, and everything seemed favourable to Lord Orville's daily-increasing desire to call Julia his own. That his father should object to the union never once entered his head. True he was young to marry, but then, he had often heard the earl say that people of rank ought to marry young, to secure them from *mésalliances*, and to strengthen their political influence. He was now nearly twenty; and, as for that matter, he should not mind waiting *a few weeks*, if his father really desired it; and, at any rate, when he should be of age, he could please himself. But then, that would be to wait fifteen months, and who could think of such an interminable length of time as that! No; he would mention it at once, and then the intervening period would be beguiled by the necessary preparations for the wedding; and it would be so delightful to consult Julia upon everything, to guess her wishes, to anticipate them! And as he thus lost himself in delicious reveries, her smiles, her blushes, rose before his eyes, her musical laugh sounded in his ears. Was ever lover happier? Yes—he would go that instant and lay his whole heart open to the earl, who, just then in better health than usual, was slowly pacing up and down the lawn in front of the house, between two magnificent rows of dwarf orange-trees, slips from the Tuileries, when, some thirty years before, he had gone to Paris, to pay his respects to Louis, *the desired*, upon his restoration.

To his father, therefore, Henry went, with his heart throbbing indeed; but it was with hope and joy, heightened by the idea of the agreeable surprise it would be to the earl to find that he had grown so steady and wise as to think, thus early, of domesticating himself for life. The result of his communication may be pretty accurately guessed at by the following letter from the earl to Mr. Courtney:—

“MALTRAVERS HALL.

“SIR,—My son, the Right Honourable Lord Orville, has this morning informed me of his desire to cement his intimacy with your family by a closer tie than I can, by any means, approve of. If I had had younger

sons, it is possible that I might not have objected to one of them forming a matrimonial alliance with the daughter of a gentleman of a character so every way respectable, and of an ancestry so ancient, and, in a moral sense, so honourable as your own ; but for my only son and heir, the sole representative of myself, I must be allowed to entertain very different views—views more in accordance with the elevated position he is destined to hold in the aristocracy of England. My son has a right to ally himself with the first families in the kingdom, and there are parties with whom his union, at no very distant period, I hope not later than on his attaining his majority, would be every way peculiarly agreeable to me ; equally on account of proximity of landed property, and similarity of political views.

“ At Lord Orville’s age, impressions of this nature must be expected ; fortunately, they are generally as evanescent as hasty. I have, therefore, no fear of his health or spirits seriously suffering from what he just now, naturally enough, feels a disappointment ; and I am sure that, in addressing myself to you as a gentleman of honour and good sense, I need not say that the surest way of enabling him to surmount his present attachment, is to withhold from him, peremptorily and absolutely, all means of strengthening it by further communication with its object.

“ I beg you, sir, to accept the assurance of my highest consideration, and I have the honour to be, sir,

“ Your faithful servant,

“ MALTRAVERS.”

Mr. Courtney would have been much amused by this epistle had he had to view it merely as a specimen of the excessive selfishness and pride which human nature can occasionally exhibit ; but his own pride, as a gentleman, was wounded by the most distant appearance of having given any clandestine encouragement to Lord Orville’s suit ; of which, to do him justice, he had never entertained the least suspicion, for he was accustomed to see young persons congregate together beneath his hospitable roof in friendly and unrestrained intercourse with each other. His parental anxiety, moreover, of a very different character from that of the Earl of Maltravers, was painfully awakened upon the receipt of his lordship’s letter, lest Lord Orville’s attachment to Julia might be returned by her with equal warmth, and perhaps more steadiness. His first step, however, was to reply to the earl forthwith, in order to show him that the subject of his letter had not called for long deliberation ; his next, to go to his wife, and put both the epistles into her hands, as the readiest mode of informing her of the matter to which they referred.

Mrs. Courtney's first thought was that which would naturally present itself to a tender mother: would her daughter be made unhappy by this abrupt termination of her acquaintance with Lord Orville? what if her affections should be engaged to him?

"She ought not to have committed herself so far as to make her happiness dependent upon any young man whatsoever, without first confiding in us," said Mr. Courtney.

"Poor darling! I dare say she never thought about it," replied his wife; "most likely she was happy without knowing why; as I remember I was at her age, when I first knew you, my dear. I am sure it never came into my head to say a word about you, either to my father or mother, till after you had spoken to them yourself."

After some further affectionate consultation, if consultation that might be called where the opinions of both parties were in exact agreement, the letter was dispatched to the earl, as follows:—

"COURTNEY PARK.

"MY LORD,—I take some degree of blame to myself for not having perceived the object which your lordship informs me Lord Orville has lately had in his visits here. Had I done so, be assured he would have received no further invitation from me, until I had made myself acquainted with your lordship's sentiments on the subject. For myself, the question of first or second sons would form no part in my calculation, where I thought my daughter's happiness might be concerned; but in the present instance, as her vivacity remains undiminished, I have no reason to imagine is the case; which I doubt not your lordship will be glad to hear, as your lordship has paid me the compliment of presuming that I must be interested in the information that Lord Orville is not likely to suffer, either in health or spirits, from the interruption of his intimacy with us. I sincerely hope, for his own sake, that he will justify your lordship's prediction; and your lordship may rely upon it, he will meet with no encouragement from me to persevere in an attachment of which your lordship disapproves, and of which my daughter herself, for anything I know to the contrary, is ignorant, even at the present moment.

I am, my lord,

Your lordship's obedient servant,

GEORGE COURTNEY."

This done, the next consideration was to get Julia out of the way of any secret interviews, or correspondence with her being attempted by Lord Orville: who, whatever credit the earl might assign him for his philosophy, did not appear

to Mr. Courtney very likely to drop at once any pursuit in which his inclination might engage him. It was, therefore, agreed that she should be sent immediately on a visit to her aunt, Mrs. Crosby, who resided some thirty miles off, in a secluded situation, on the Wolds of Yorkshire. Thither her mother accompanied her, remaining a few days with her, until she should feel herself familiarized with relations whom she had hitherto but seldom seen.

As for Lord Orville, he was sentenced to pass the remainder of the vacation amid the pomps and gravities of Maltravers Hall ; to indemnify himself for the dulness of which he renewed his intimacy with Frank Shirley, who was just then himself doing penance, under his father's eye, for having joined a company of strolling players, with whom he had been *starring* it from one village to another, to the great admiration of the cherry-cheeked damsels and flaxen-headed young farmers who composed the chief part of his audience, and who listened to him open-mouthed, applauding his exertions for their amusement with an uproariousness of approbation that convinced him he only wanted a wider and more refined field of action to constitute himself the Roscius of the day.

But though Lord Orville shared Shirley's frolics, *pour se désennuyer*, and did his best to initiate him, in return, into the fashionable follies of college life, Julia Courtney had made too deep an impression on his heart for it to be effaced at the haughty *dictum* of his father, which had awakened in his breast the first sense of injustice, the first feeling of resentment it had ever known, and given birth to a determined resolution on his part to achieve his object, as soon as, by coming of age, he should be enabled to renew his suit. Meanwhile, he looked impatiently forward to his return to Cambridge, where he trusted to continue Clement Courtney's friendship, the hope of which was his greatest consolation.

It is not always the events that appear most important at the time, but those which grow out of them, that often exercise a lasting influence upon our destiny. Lord Orville's love for Julia Courtney, her artless return of it, unconsciously even to herself, their separation, and her being sent from her beloved home, were only the affair of a few short days ; but, alas ! their consequences were long and sorrowful.

After spending ten days with her sister, Mrs. Courtney returned to her husband, under the escort of Clement, who came to Crosby House to conduct her back. Unfortunately, on their road homewards, one of the postilions, turning a sharp angle, came in contact with a loaded waggon, and was thrown off his horse. The waggon, at that instant, passing over him, fractured his arm and crushed two or three of his ribs. Mrs. Courtney, much shocked at the accident, instantly got out of the carriage, and had the poor fellow placed withinside. She then walked with her son to the nearest dwelling, which was a small farm-house, on the road-side, where the sufferer was put to bed, and a surgeon sent for. The family, meanwhile, rendered him every service in their power ; but they were themselves in affliction, as their mourning garbs bespoke. The eldest son had been buried that morning : a malignant fever had carried him off, in the flower of youth ; and the weeping mother told Mrs. Courtney that she had two more children at that time ill of the same disorder. The moment Clement Courtney heard her utter these words, a vague sense of danger, a presentiment of evil came over his heart. He looked anxiously towards his mother ; he wished she had not entered the house. It was evident that the malady was one of an infectious nature. She was fatigued, fluttered : she might be more susceptible of contagion at such a moment. He would have urged her to proceed immediately, but he was unwilling to raise any uneasiness in her mind. Yet his own fears for her increased upon him, and at length, after walking up and down the room for a quarter of an hour, with his watch in his hand, he exclaimed,

"My dear mother, I see no use in your waiting here any longer. You will not, as it is, be at home till long after dinner-time, and my father will wonder what has detained us."

"But surely, my dear Clement, you would not have us leave this poor boy till we hear what can be done for him?"

"No ; I will stay and settle everything, if you will only go."

"Why, Clement, I never knew you so impatient before."

"Because I am so uneasy—so anxious—that is, I mean my father will be anxious—I am sure he will. It will be quite dusk before you reach the park."

Mrs. Courtney made light of her son's inquietude, and

would not hear of leaving the house until she had seen the surgeon. Fortunately he arrived in the middle of the discussion ; and as, after a careful examination of his patient, he pronounced his hope that he should send him home in the course of a fortnight, Courtney had at last the satisfaction of putting his mother again into the carriage. After leaving a liberal sum with the mistress of the house, and giving the surgeon his address, with a charge that the patient should want for nothing, he took his seat by her side, and strove, as they rattled off, to cast away the gloomy forebodings that had usurped his mind during the time they had been detained upon the road.

But, alas ! these forebodings were too sadly verified ! A few days after her return home, Mrs. Courtney was attacked with fever, as was also the female attendant who had accompanied her. The young woman struggled through the disease, but Mrs. Courtney sank under it, three weeks after the commencement of her attack.

From the very nature of the malady, poor Julia was precluded the consolation of taking a last farewell of her beloved mother ; for Mr. Courtney, bewildered and overwhelmed by the suddenness of his bereavement, trembled lest the remaining objects of his love should be snatched from him by the same awful agency ; and as soon as he had paid the last mournful duties to his lamented wife, he took his son with him across the channel to Boulogne, whence, in a few days, he set off to Switzerland, hoping to find in the grandeur and sublimity of nature a solace to the grief which any attempt at what is vainly called amusement, in general society, would only have tended to increase.

Clement, however, saw, with deep concern, that the beautiful and varied scenes through which they passed had no effect in rousing the spirits of his father, whose health, on the contrary, seemed gradually sinking under the constant recollection of his loss. A cold, caught on the lake of Geneva, laid the foundation of a pulmonary disease, for which his physicians were disinterested enough to prescribe him the more genial climate of the southern side of the Alps : he accordingly journeyed on, from one lovely spot to another, till he finally reached the "Eternal City," where he resolved to take up his abode for the winter.

Julia, meanwhile, poor Julia! had begun with her first cares, as with her first sorrows. The parting with her mother, joined to the thought that Lord Orville might be coming again to visit Clement during her absence, had caused her the first bitter tears she had ever shed in her hitherto happy life : but, like April showers, they were irradiated with sunbeams, with that magic light in which hope decks the future to youth. In their eyes, it is such a long vista ! it seems so bright, too, all the way ; and strewn with flowers which invite the hand to pluck them. Her parents had not informed her of the mortifying tone of the Earl of Maltravers' letter, or, indeed, of anything connected with it ; for they were equally unwilling to wound her delicacy by the disclosure, or to risk increasing whatever predilection she might entertain for Lord Orville, by the discovery of the extent of his attachment to her. She, therefore, very naturally, thought that, however *mal à propos* the time that her parents had chosen for her to pay this long-talked of visit to her aunt, yet once paid, she should not soon be called upon to repeat it ; and, if not quite so agreeable as she might desire, it would only make her own dear home, and her dear parents, still dearer to her on her return.

Little did Julia anticipate that her home would never again be to her what it had been ; that her parents she was never more destined to see. The first tidings she received, was of her mother's illness ; the next, of her death : and her passionate bursts of agony were increased by the thought that she had unwittingly been the cause of it. If she could have had the consolation of sharing her father's and her brother's grief, it would have been some assuagement of her own ; but, deprived of this also, by the peculiar circumstances attendant upon her loss, she was left to deplore it, comparatively alone, with all the acuteness with which a young heart feels its first affliction. Unfortunately, Mrs. Crosby, whom her father had intended to supply to her during his absence, the place of her departed parent, was in no way calculated to do so. Feeble in health, and of a querulous nervous temperament, married to a man of an avaricious and unsocial turn of mind, her life had passed in a very narrow circle ; and having lost all her children, in their infancy, except one sickly ill-favoured son, whom she

had, by dint of unceasing care, reared to man's estate, he remained, by habit, the sole object of her attention ; his mind, enervated by injudicious indulgence, and narrowed by perpetual recurrence to himself. The sparkling beauty of his cousin had at first dazzled, rather than attracted him ; he stared at her, in a sort of mute wonder ; and when she contrasted his yellow eyes, red hair, and insignificant appearance with Lord Orville's finely-cut features, and animated countenance, the poor girl scarcely knew whether to laugh or to cry : but when her brilliance was veiled in grief, when, under the impression of that grief, her character assumed a passive quietness, altogether foreign to her natural disposition, but much more in affinity with the habitual dulness of his own, he then began to fancy that there might be a similarity, a sympathy, between them ; and that his vivacious radiant cousin might so far sober down, under the influence of matrimony, as to make him a very suitable and desirable wife ; in which case he would be spared the trouble of going further to look for one ; which, as young ladies were scarce in his neighbourhood, and the roads bad, was a matter worth considering. He therefore commenced a regular court to her, of which she was for some time entirely unaware ; and when she did, at last, unwillingly, admit into her mind the aim and meaning of his attentions, she shrank from them with fear and repugnance, and wept afresh, as she contrasted her present abode with the happy scenes and beloved associates of her own home ; lamenting, with renewed grief, her irreparable loss in the dear mother who had sanctioned all her innocent enjoyments.

She was soon to have another trial equally severe ; her brother had the melancholy task of informing her that they were orphans : their surviving parent had died at Rome, after only a few hours of actual illness, and at a time when the improvement in his general health had appeared to sanction the most favourable predictions of his medical men as to his final recovery.

Clement Courtney dearly loved his sister. He softened the painful intelligence he had to convey to her, by every tender condolence, and kind assurance. He told her he should take upon himself the duty of bringing the remains of his father to England, and seeing the last obsequies paid to them ; which done, he should immediately come to see her

at Crosby House, that they might weep together, and console each other.

The intervening weeks, between the receipt of this letter, and the arrival of her brother, were spent by Julia almost entirely in her own room ; and she felt grateful to her aunt for allowing her the seclusion of it uninterrupted. To say the truth, Mrs. Crosby thought that her niece, during the first burst of her affliction, was as well there as anywhere else ; not that the good lady did not sincerely compassionate her sorrows, and share them as much as it was in her nature to share anything that did not touch immediately either herself or her son ; but that her own invalid habits had, for so many years, accustomed her to see herself the chief object of attention to every one around her, that she felt it something strange and new to have anybody but herself to think for and care about : it made her quite ill, she found out ; it fluttered her so, that it brought on her "gastric ;" for your regular valetudinarian must always be in the fashion of the day, with regard to the prevailing malady, so she had of late patronized gastric affections. In short, she was obliged to keep her room also, and nurse herself ; so her son was obliged to roam about the house by himself, and find it duller than ever ; which in his own mind, he set down to his being in love with his cousin Julia.

At length, poor Julia had the only satisfaction she had experienced since she had last parted with her brother, that of finding herself once more in his arms ; and as he pressed her fondly to his bosom, and mingled his tears with hers, she felt that even the mournful, the altered circumstances under which they met, would be comparatively easy to bear, might she but seek for fortitude and returning cheerfulness in his society. This, however, was not to be. Her father, by his will, left her ten thousand pounds, to be placed solely at her own disposal, on her coming of age : the interest, in the mean time, to be appropriated to her "education, board, and maintenance," whilst she remained under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Crosby, whom he appointed her guardians, in conjunction with her brother, and with whom he wished her to reside during her minority.

Poor Julia ! this was a most unexpected and unpalatable news to her.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LA DAME DE SOCIÉTÉ.

THE idea of remaining four long years in the dulness of Crosby House, with no society beyond that of her valetudinarian aunt, her close and narrow-minded uncle, and her insignificant cousin Nicholas, always insipid, when he was not positively disagreeable, was insupportable to Julia. There was, however, no alternative. Clement felt that she was yet too young to reside with him, without elder female companionship ; and even had he been fortunate enough to know of any desirable *chaperon* for her, the indelicacy of seeming to throw her again into the way of Lord Orville, would have operated with him as an insuperable objection to her returning, at that time, to Courtney Park. At Crosby House, therefore, she was destined to remain, and a lady was to be sought for, immediately, as her governess and companion ; for Mrs. Crosby declared herself quite unequal to the fatigue of directing her studies, and indeed the charge of her niece at all would have been quite an affliction to her, had she not borne in mind, that the society of a young person in the house would amuse her son when the weather might be too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry, for him to venture out of doors. As for Mr. Crosby, all that he thought about the matter was, that Julia was a good, pretty girl, and with ten thousand pounds in her pocket, might suit his son for a wife, as well as anybody else, if he could but persuade her to think so ; and any rate she was a gain to them, as she could pay handsomely for her board. The solitude of Courtney Park pressed as heavily upon the heart of the young heir, when he returned to it, as the dulness of Crosby House did on that of his sister. The portraits of his father and mother continually reminded him of his loss ; he missed them in every room, and every path ; their attachment to each other, their fondness for their children, their consideration for every one around them, their social virtues, their intellectual resources, were continually rising to his memory, and even when he was solemnly determining to imitate all their excellencies, he felt the sadness of not having their

affectionate approbation to encourage him in his good resolutions.

Men certainly have many advantages over women, it cannot be denied ; and one of them is, that in case of sorrow, they can more readily seek relief in change of scene. Clement Courtney resolved to give some time to travel. He had been so closely confined by his father's illness, that he had not profited by his visit to the Continent so much as he had anticipated ; he therefore determined to go over the same ground, to extend his route through Italy, into the classic haunts of Greece, to return by the Northern States, and then to take his place in the hall of his ancestors, as his father's representative, in that most enviable rank in the whole scale of civilized society, an independent English country gentleman.

"By that time," thought he, "Orville will, in all probability, be married, and then I can have dear Julia with me, to do the honours of my table, until I find some one worthy of taking my dear mother's place, at the head of it, and who may, with the blessing of Heaven, be everything to me, that she was to my excellent father."

So he rode over to Crosby House, again, to cheer Julia with this prospect, and to take leave of her and his relatives, previous to his departure. He found the family circle a little more cheerful than heretofore ; having received a very loquacious addition in the person of Julia's governess, a Madame de Villebois, one of the inexhaustible stock of widows of Napoleon's generals, which, ever since the battle of Waterloo, has regularly supplied the aristocracy of England and Russia with governesses for their daughters, to qualify them for the parts they are destined to play in the world of fashion, wherein they seldom fail to bring into action the theories impressed by their experienced instructresses, upon the ductile imaginations of their youth.

Madame de Villebois was a complete specimen of a French woman "*sous l'Empire*." Perfectly well mannered ; possessing a thorough knowledge of the world, and intent upon turning that knowledge to her own advantage, tolerably well read, on popular topics, and appearing much better informed than she really was, by the torrents of eloquence she

intrepidly poured forth on all subjects, very superficially accomplished, but acquainted with a hundred amusing games, and ingenious trifles, wherewith to enliven the monotony of the evenings, and, above all, endowed with tact to find out, and indulge, the prevailing inclination of every member of the family. She pleased Mrs. Crosby, by perpetually talking to her of her complaints ; and telling her of divers similar cases, which she had, with her own eyes, seen cured by the mysterious prescriptions of some fashionable somnambulist, or cunning mesmerist. She roused the attention of Mr. Crosby, by marvellous narrations of the battles and onslaughts in which, "le cher général," her husband, had been foremost in danger and glory ; and she called forth the gallantries of Nicholas, as far as he had them in his nature to be called forth, by her incessant *persiflages*, and *agaceries*, which, as she was old enough to be his grandmother, appeared to him excessively amusing. Julia perplexed her the most. She had described the gaities of Paris to her, without awakening in her the slightest appearance of wishing to behold, or participate in, them. She had talked of the fashions ; Julia, in deep mourning, took no interest in them. She had rallied her upon the attentions of her cousin Nicholas ; she saw that her raillery was thrown away. The fact was, that Madame de Villebois was far too artificial and worldly a companion to please Julia. She would have liked one nearer her own age, with whom she could have run about the fields, and among the cottagers, as she used to do at home ; but alas ! she was now no longer

"A young and happy child,"

but a young lady of independent fortune, that must consider her position in society, and be fitted for it accordingly. She was, however, of too affectionate a nature, too susceptible of kindness, not to return, in some degree, the attachment which Madame de Villebois professed for her ; and Clement, though he could have wished that the lady who was to stand in the place of a mother to her, had somewhat more resembled that mother in character, was yet fully disposed to render justice to the cheerfulness, that enviable characteristic of her nation, with which she accommodated herself to the peculiar humours of all around her, and sustained the sudden

reverse of fortune that had, by her own account, thrown her out of the high circle, of which she herself formed the admired centre, into one where, it was evident, the dulness was far more trying to her than the dependence. He was, therefore, inclined to consider her as decidedly an acquisition to the family party, and encouraged himself to hope that, with her aid, his sister would be enabled to get over the time of his absence with tolerable comfort and some advantage. Under this impression he made a friendly sojourn of some days with his relatives, more agreeably than he could have anticipated, inasmuch that, when the moment for his departure arrived, he took a cheerful as well as an affectionate leave of them, and his sister, and a very polite one, *à la Française*, of Madame de Villebois, who pronounced him *un très joli garçon*.

For poor Julia, however, the moment of her losing sight of him was that of the recommencement of her griefs ; which, suspended by his presence, had, for the time, given way to the comparative gaiety which had deceived him respecting the real state of her feelings. The occasional mention of Lord Orville, which, in the affectionate intercourse of brother and sister, it was impossible, without the appearance of formality or reserve, to avoid, had brought him back to her fancy with all the vividness which had been clouded in the first months of her sorrow for the loss of her parents. In proportion as her cousin's attentions became every day more and more disagreeable to her, her aunt began to advocate his cause with more and more of the querulousness of selfish sensibility. She was sure her son would be quite ill if his cousin could be so cruel as to refuse him.

"And how very hard that would be upon me," she said, "after having nursed him as I have done, notwithstanding my own delicate health and my gastric affection, through the hooping-cough, and the croup, and the small-pox, and the measles, and the scarlatina, to see him, after all, go moping and pining about. I am sure it will bring on my hysteria and my neuralgia ; I know it will."

She never asked herself what it might bring on with Julia, to "mope and pine about" through life with a young man she could neither love nor respect. Mr. Crosby stood pretty well neutral in the business. Had Julia's property been in

land, and that land contiguous to his own, he might have taken a more active part in it. To be sure ten thousand pounds was a snug little sum, but then the longer his son remained a bachelor the longer it would be before he would require a separate maintenance; so Mr. Crosby, calculating that what would be gained one way would be lost another, wisely turned optimist on the occasion, and resolved to think that whatever way the thing might turn out it was sure to be "all for the best."

As to Madame de Villebois, it was utterly impossible that, either as a French woman, or as "the widow of one of Napoleon's generals," she should remain an indifferent or silent spectator of the family politics. She complimented the parents on the charming docility of their son—the son on his good taste in admiring the beauty of his cousin, his cousin on the power of her attractions, and herself on her profound discernment in foreseeing all that would come to pass, from the first moment of her entering the house, and on her exquisite skill in bringing, as she was persuaded she should do, all parties *d'accord*. Neither was she without her own peculiar inducements to use the utmost of her eloquence in pointing out to Julia the advantages she would derive from having an establishment of her own—a *trousseau du meilleur goût*, the *corbeille des noces*, un *joli équipage*, and all the other *agrémens* that she had never yet known to fail in reconciling a French girl of seventeen to matrimony, be the *parti* what he might. She considered that Julia, in the dulness of country life, might be glad of her as *dame de compagnie*, many more years than she would require her services as *institutrice*; that the *ménage* of a young couple must always be gayer than that of an old one; and that, if Julia were not very much enamoured of her husband's company, it would be all the more easy to prevail upon her to seek for more varied and animating society in the *beau monde*.

On Julia, however, all Madame de Villebois' arguments were thrown away. She had one at the bottom of her heart which rendered them all nugatory. She did not love her cousin, and she did love Lord Orville. With her this decided the question at once. The prospect before her was, therefore, a trying one to her young philosophy; for more

than three years longer she was to be condemned to see Nicholas Crosby every day, and Lord Orville never. Who is there that cannot recollect how long a period three years appeared to them to look forward to at Julia's age! And in that long period Lord Orville might forget her. Poor Julia! she wept whenever she thought of it, and as that was many times every day, her cousin was constantly surprising her in tears; then he made himself sure that her dislike to him was the sole cause of them, and he poured his griefs at the thought into his mother's ears, till the poor lady, between vexation and helplessness, found her whole system turned topsy-turvy. She was, moreover, really alarmed for her niece, who grew pale and thin, and was pronounced, by the Æsculapius of the family, to be falling into a state of nervous debility that rendered change of air necessary for her immediately.

"Ah! poor thing," said Mrs. Crosby, "nervous, is she? I thought she was. She has such an uneasy, unsettled look, and she is so restless too. She is always walking about the lawn—in and out, in and out. I wonder she does not catch her death of cold. Ah, well! I pity her—that I do. I know so well what it is, and so does my poor Nicholas too. He shakes like an aspen leaf if anybody speaks quick to him, and tears start into his eyes for nothing at all, poor fellow! Oh, dear! what a blessing health is if we could but think so!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

INCIDENTS AT HARROGATE.

THE next question for consideration in the Crosby family, after the decree had gone forth that change of air was absolutely necessary for Julia, was, in what direction the change should be sought—east, west, north, or south.

The doctor, like a kind-hearted sensible man, as he was, seeing that his young patient was naturally of a vivacious and susceptible temperament, concluded that in all probability she was languishing for greater variety of events, and society more congenial to her age than Crosby House and its environs could afford her. He therefore wisely recom-

mended Harrogate, as a place fraught with amusements, to those who might wish to be amused, and yet leaving every one at liberty to enter into them, or not, as might be agreeable. This recommendation was fortunate enough to please all parties. Mrs. Crosby, because she thought the waters might be of service to her own viscera, and her son's nose, which had lately assumed a tinge of red, that made the sallowness of his cheek still more striking; her son, because, provided he was with Julia, all places were alike to him; Julia, because Harrogate was not Crosby House; Mr. Crosby, because it was within half a day's ride of home, so that he could go backwards and forwards, and overlook his affairs as usual; and Madame de Villebois, because she understood there were promenade-rooms and concert-rooms, where she trusted her toilette would not disgrace the character of her nation, throughout the civilized globe, for its taste in externals, and its ingenuity in trifles.

Accordingly the very next week the whole party were safely domiciled at the "Granby," at High-Harrogate. Mrs. Crosby and her son immediately began to prepare themselves, by a series of precautionary and preventive measures, for a regular course of the waters, which certainly combine horrors of taste and smell quite enough to authorize the idea that something very wonderful must be connected with them. Mr. Crosby found the excellent dinners at the "Granby" the most entertaining feature of the place. Julia, still nervous and restless, alternately coaxed Madame de Villebois to ramble about the most romantic and secluded spots in the neighbourhood, and did penance by accompanying her, in return, to the wells, and other places of public resort.

But morning walks were not enough for Madame de Villebois. She strongly recommended "*distraction*," that universal panacea with French women, for her young charge, in every available shape; and as there was at that time a very respectable corps of the children of Thespis in the place, some of the members of which had arrived at it in that classical conveyance a waggon, according to the most ancient custom of their predecessors, she proposed, one evening, that the whole party should go to the theatre, to be edified with "Lovers' Vows," and "Love Laughs at Lock-

smiths." One of the stage boxes was accordingly secured for them. Julia was stationed in the front, with Madame de Villebois, as Mrs. Crosby's head could not bear the lamps; and Nicholas took his seat behind his cousin, who, greatly interested in this, the first dramatic representation she had ever seen, forgot, for the time, the sorrows which had saddened her beauty, and sat with her eyes eagerly fixed on the stage, and a look of delight that bespoke her what she really was—the child of nature and sensibility. Her deep attention, and the animated expression of her countenance, varying with every sentiment of the scene, seemed to flatter the hero of the piece, who from the first moment that he distinguished her pretty face in the box, turned himself continually towards it in all his most pathetic apostrophes and touching attitudes; and, moreover, when he hid his face in his hands, in what is technically termed the applauding corner, apparently in an agony of contending emotions, Julia actually saw him taking steadfast examination of her features, between his half-opened fingers. She coloured deeply, and hastily brushed away some drops that were glittering on her eyelashes; for his scene with his mother had beguiled her of many tears, and some audible sobs, greatly to the uneasiness of her cousin; and she was afraid that she might have made herself somewhat conspicuous by them to the interesting "Frederick," particularly as on looking round the house, she saw every one else perfectly unconcerned; some affecting apathetic indifference, others assuming the airs of supercilious criticism.

The farce, however, speedily changed the complexion of her thoughts, and her clear and artless laughter excited something like a smile of sympathy in certain *blasés* faces, well known at Harrogate, that looked as if all sources of merriment, on their own account, had been long "used up."

As for Madame de Villebois, she sat with a dignified air, as if the whole performance had been prepared for herself alone; nodding her head critically whenever she caught the eye of any of the actors; beating time with her play-bill to the *orchestra*, which consisted of three fiddles, a flute, and a bassoon; and waking Mr. Crosby up, from time to time, with anecdotes of Talma and Mademoiselle Mars;

giving a smothered sigh to Paris and the "Odéon;" and then consoling herself with glancing round the house, to confirm her secret opinion that there was not a lady in it so well dressed as herself.

Mrs. Crosby, with the aid of her vinaigrette, her aromatic lozenges, and her fan, got through the evening pretty well; excepting, indeed, that the lights hurt her eyes, and the music made her head ache, and the heat made her feel faint, and the cold air, every time the door was opened, brought on her rheumatism, and she was sure it would give Nicholas cold, and very likely a stiff neck into the bargain; which, however, Nicholas took good care to give himself before leaving the box, by bolstering his throat with one *comforter* after another, till he could scarcely move his head. He next drew his respirator so tight across his mouth, that it almost defeated its office, and, instead of enabling him to breathe with impunity, scarcely allowed him to breathe at all; then buttoned himself closely up in his great-coat, pulling the collar up to his ears, and then looking a non-descript sort of animal, which would have rejoiced the "Zoological," and made the fortune of Mr. Wombwell—something between a mummy and a crocodile—he turned slowly round and offered his arm, in silence, to his cousin.

It is curious to see how trifling events, or, at least, such as appear trifling at the moment of their occurrence, as the spider's web, are frequently so interwoven with the web of our destiny, as to form the foundation of its strongest threads. The entertainment of that evening at the theatre, decided Julia Courtney's lot in life. Two days after, Lord Orville, who was lounging away his vacation very much to his own dissatisfaction, in the splendid solitude of Maltravers Hall, received the following epistle from the play-fellow of his childhood, the companion of his youth.

"Rose and Crown, Harrogate, 18th.

"MY DEAR LORD,—'Lend me your ears!' But I need not ask you; not only would you lend, but give me them; or, at least, you would have done last night in exchange for my eyes. Not that I have the vanity to pit my optics against your lordship's, though they are perhaps as effective in their way. Colour is a matter of taste, or rather of sheer fancy:

"Les yeux noirs, et les yeux bleus.

'who shall decide when' not 'doctors' but 'ladies disagree?' How-

ever, I did not mean my eyes for themselves—eyes, as a *genus*, though we flatter ourselves, art and part of a *genius*—but for the object they rested upon : nay, had at brief snatches rested upon—which object was no other than Miss Courtney ! Should I not say *your* Miss Courtney ? or what was your Miss Courtney ? now pale and thin, yet beautiful as ever ; nay, more so : for what she has lost in brilliancy, she seems to me to have more than gained in sentiment, and, I may fairly add, in judgment too. You would have been jealous if you had seen how she admired my acting. I beheld her tears ; I heard her sob when the parson came to see me in prison ; I saw she thought I must inevitably be hung. I was quite moved. I was very near forgetting my part, and begging her not to make herself uneasy. She cheered up, however, in the after-piece. You should have heard her delightful laugh ! Everybody congratulated me on playing so well. Who would not, indeed, play well, with such a sweet spectatress ! What, then, if a whole audience were made up of such creatures of sensibility and discernment ? It would be too much ; it would be like the Irishman's apple-pie—all of quinces.

“ But to proceed methodically, like a legitimate five-act piece, with all the unities of time and place duly observed. You know I have been *starring* it, the last six weeks, with Butler's company ; or rather, I might say, if my modesty would permit me, *cometing* it, for I have described a very irregular orbit, and drawn a very long tail after me. Well, at last we reached this far-famed mart of marriages and fashion ; and last night I came out in ‘Lovers' Vows.’ You know how inimitably I play ‘Frederick ;’ how great I am when I rob my father. Well, just as I was saying

“Your purse or your life !”

I was riveted by a pair of sparkling black eyes, fixed upon me with an expression of the most intense sympathy. I instantly recognized your lady-love, and from that moment I felt a fresh impetus. I believe I never acted with such electrifying effect—not even on that memorable night when your lordship honoured my *débat* in ‘Alexander the Great,’ in farmer Leyland's barn. The business of the theatre over, I gave a furtive glance, through a hole in the curtain, at Miss Courtney's party, in the stage-box. In the front sat your lovely Julia ; at her side a lady ‘of a certain age,’ who, by her exclamations, ‘O, mon dieu !’ ‘Ah ! qu'il est charmant, ce jeune homme !’ ‘Ah ! qu'il me rappelle Talma !’ &c. &c. ; as well as by her shrugs, and the peculiar movement of her eyes, which took a survey of the whole house in one effectual ogle, I immediately set down for a French woman. Behind her was a gooseberry-eyed carrotty-locked youth, who had looked very little at the stage and very much at the young lady. Next to him a pale lady, all profile, with a very unhappy-looking mouth, who, I imagined, from an indescribable similarity of twistiness of expression, might have the felicity of being his mother ; and behind her a portly purple personage, whom I presumed to have the honour of being her spouse, and who, overcome by the emotion I raised in him, in the first act, had gone to sleep at the end of it, and did not thoroughly wake up again till the announcement of ‘Mrs. Crosby's carriage,’ which, from the haste with which he

then jumped up, I rather fancy he mistook for a summons to supper. Be that as it may, I ran, the moment I heard the name, to the book-keeper, to ascertain if I was correct; found it a true bill; ran back again, popped into my dressing-closet (room, they call it—five feet by two), disguised my natural graces in the suit of livery the manager furnishes me with for ‘Scrub’—do you remember our ‘Beaux’ Stratagem?’—and rushed with all speed to the ‘Hawk and Hand,’ where a corps of the *élite* of the parti-coloured gentry hold their councils of state as soon as they believe their lords and ladies, or masters and mistresses, to be happy in the embraces of Morpheus. Here I found a junta of these highly-respectable functionaries assembled over very dirty cards and very good mulled ale. Among them, as I had hoped, was Mrs. Crosby’s coachman—a regular Jehu of the old school—flaxen wig, rosy cheeks,

“‘His fair round belly with good capon lined,’

and enveloped in a green velvet waistcoat, which accorded vastly well with his green and scarlet livery. I singled him out at once from his peers as the object of my special civilities, and, by the double temptation of a game at cribbage, and a glass of brandy-and-water, I seduced him into a *tête-à-tête* in a corner,

“‘Far retired from noise and smoke;’

and in the course of losing a few shillings to him, by dint of overlooking my fifteens and neglecting to score my knaves, and by replenishing our tumblers, we became such excellent friends, that he very obligingly gave me the history of the whole family he had the honour of driving. See the advantage these rascally coachmen have over the rest of the world; they are never driven—they are not even led—they always drive!

“But however, envy is a base passion—away with it! they look down from their boxes, I look up at mine. It seems that ever since Miss Courtney’s abode with her uncle and aunt, and her delectable cousin, whose name is Nicholas,—what can be expected from such a name? subject, moreover, to the abbreviation of Nickey! But, shade of Nicholas Rowe, forgive me, I had forgotten ‘The Revenge’ and ‘The Mourning Bride’—I that have played ‘Yanga’ and ‘Alphonso’ with such unbounded applause. But your lordship will be taking your revenge of me if I discourse in this manner. To return, therefore, to your bride that is to be—the ‘mourning’ part I trust omitted; for at present, instead of enacting

“‘—— the goddess fair and free,
In heaven ycleped Euphrosyne,’

as which your lordship was first captivated by her, she has changed her cast, and taken the part of the rival sister,

that is to say,
“‘—— sage and holy:’

“‘—— divinest melancholy.’

‘The poor young lady,’ said the Jehu, in the momentary pause betwixt

counting fifteen *fourteen* and a flush of five, and looking at his *crib*, 'takes on so bad about her papa and mamma, as is very nat'ral to a young thing as is anything of a Christian, that it makes one's heartache to see her. It would quite put me off my meat if I was forced to be always with her; yet, I take it, she is nat'rally of a livelyish sort of a temper, quite different. I've seen her myself, when she first came, frisk about our fields like a young filly; but now she's always a-crying and hiding herself up. Our folks thought at one time a bit of love-making might do her good and cheer her up, as would be nat'ral enough, so they set our young squire at her; but, Lord bless you! that did not do at all, at all; for then she fretted herself ten times worse than ever, and doctor said she would have histrikes, and go into a galloping consumption, if she had not somewhat of a change of hair, for that Crosby House did not agree with her by no means and no how, and that's what we are here for;' he concluded by taking up his *crib*, in which he was unconscionable enough, by-the-by, to reckon another fifteen and a pair of knaves; and I think the fellow would make a very good historian, he states the facts and draws the conclusions, *multum in parvo*. Perhaps your lordship may be wishing, as you read this, that I would follow his example. I will, therefore, only add that if I can be useful, command me to the uttermost. You know very well that, for you, I should think it

" '—— an easy leap,

To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon.'

And, by-the-by, the moon will be at the full to-morrow night—*young ladies love moonlight nights—verbum sat*. 'A word to the wise.'

"The Crosbys are only going to stay a week. The French lady (I was right enough in my guess as to her nationality) is Miss Courtney's governess. Coachee tells me she has been in all Nap's battles, and often fought along with him side by side. Depend upon it she is thoroughly used to

" '—— moving accidents by flood and field,'

and will make an excellent ally if properly manœuvred. So, farewell, my dear lord, for the present. Address to me, as heretofore, at the greengrocer's, 'first floor down the chimney,' which I choose, as Mr. Tibbs did, 'for the sake of the view,' and believe me ever your

"Fidus Achates,

"FRANK SHIRLEY."

This letter reached Lord Orville precisely at the moment when he was thinking of Julia with all the fondness of a young lover, forcibly separated from the object of his first attachment, and contrasting her artless vivacity and sensibility with the sickly pedantry of a right honourable lady Almeria Stopford, whom his right honourable father particularly desired him to espouse, and whom he had been visiting along with the earl, to his infinite *ennui*, only the preceding day.

Her ladyship was one of those unfortunate young ladies, by no means scarce in the present age, who are seized with the ambition of learning everything that is to be learned, and of showing off everything they have learned to everybody and anybody who may come in their way. Poor Lord Orville was bored to death with her playing, her singing, her painting, her modelling, even her poonah work and her wax flowers; then her French, and Italian, and German, and Spanish; with a *souçon* of Latin, and a hint at Hebrew, everything, in short, but good plain English; and he thought, as he looked at her long peaky face, and anxious countenance, and her sharp elbows, and her lean shoulders—meeting like pinions upon her hollow back, how much more delightful was his Julia's freshness of health, and vivacity of youth, and readiness of enjoyment.

Lady Almeria was quick enough, however, to perceive that she made no very favourable impression on the young lord, who she knew quite well was destined, both by his father and her own, to be the enviable possessor of her hand; and as she considered herself fully entitled to the attentions of any duke in the land, short of royalty, being herself an only child and sole heiress of vast possessions, she took no pains to hide the ill-humour and resentment with which Lord Orville's listlessness and abstraction filled her breast.

The earl read the lady's dissatisfaction in her countenance, which was one of those unhappy ones that are much more eloquent in betraying emotions of a painful than a pleasurable nature. Extremely angry with his son for causing it, he tried to remove the impression by every polite attention of the old school, and succeeded so well by his flatteries and solemn admiration of her multifarious acquirements, that her brow gradually unbent itself, and she began to think that by securing the father instead of the son she should be a countess at once, and would most likely be left in a few years in unfettered possession of her rank, with the addition of a splendid jointure.

The earl seeing the storm clearing off thought it prudent to take his leave at the favourable moment of more agreeable impressions: he accordingly requested his carriage, and Lord Orville sprang towards the bell, with the eagerness of a school boy "kept in" during a half-holiday. The lady

coloured—the earl frowned—the carriage was announced—and five minutes after the earl was ensconced within it, his son by his side, respectfully listening to a lecture on the impropriety and impolicy of the inattention and abstraction he had displayed during their visit.

It may be easily imagined how effectually Shirley's letter put all the earl's reproofs and exhortations out of Lord Orville's head. His Julia, pale, heart-broken, tormented by the importunities of one who was for ever at her side ; the thought was not to be endured ! See her he must, and would ; ay, and that very day too, if it were possible.

Lord Orville was very like Julia in one respect : he had from his cradle been accustomed to unlimited indulgence, his wishes had never been crossed but in one single instance, and that was with regard to herself. Though his disposition was naturally good, he had neither forgotten nor forgiven this one solitary opposition to his desires ; nor would he have submitted to it with the outward appearance of obedience that he had done, if he had not been sustained in it by a firm though secret resolution of eventually having his own way.

Like Julia too if he had not been naturally amiable he must inevitably have had all the faults of a spoiled child ; as it was, he had only one : he was obstinate. Julia had not that one ; on the contrary she was too yielding. Instead, however, of digressing into an analysis of his lordship's characteristics, we must return to him walking up and down his room, reading the letter over and over again, and devising a thousand pretexts for getting away from the Hall. He could think of none sufficiently plausible to answer his purpose.

A message came from the earl : “ His lordship was waiting breakfast for him.” Lord Orville obeyed the summons with perplexed brow and heated cheek. He gulped his coffee down, but he could not swallow a mouthful.

“ My dear Henry,” said the alarmed father, reproaching himself for the lecture he had given him the preceding evening, “ what is the matter ? you are not well—you eat nothing—you are feverish ! ”

“ I think I am rather, my lord : my head throbs, and my heart beats so—and I feel all in a flutter.”

"Good heavens, my son ! how long have you been so ? how wrong you were, how very wrong, not to ring your bell in the night, to send for advice ! you have taken cold, your hands burn, and your eyes sparkle, and you are flushed like crimson—nay, now you are pale—show me your tongue !"

And the earl was solemnly preparing his spectacles, but it was by no means in Lord Orville's politics to be put on the sick list.

"Oh no !" he hastily replied, "it is nothing at all ; I took more wine yesterday than I usually do ; the dinner was so dull, begging your lordship's pardon ; and you know I hate wine, it always makes me feverish ; and then that hot drawing-room, with such an immense fire and so many lights, and all so close and curtained up ! I thought I should have been suffocated ; the very recollection of it seems to choke me. But with your lordship's leave I will take a good long ride to-day somewhere or other, and I shall be quite well to-morrow."

"Do, my dear boy, do," said the anxious earl. "I hope it will be of service to you, and that you will come back with a good appetite. Take Williams with you ; do not ride too fast, nor go too far. There is a nice road just going in at the gate, that leads to Lord Stopford's quarry ; it takes you all round the property near the house, and you will see what a very pretty property it is."

"I think I had rather not go that way," said Lord Orville. "I have a fancy for exploring the country, in exactly the opposite direction."

He then kissed his father's hand, saying to him, affectionately, "And you, sir, take care of yourself." And ten minutes afterwards he was fairly in his saddle, on his way to Harrogate, attended by his groom, whom, however, he dismissed at the end of the first twenty miles, with a note to the earl, stating that, having taken it into his head that he should like to look at the beauties of Studley and Hackfall, he should take it leisurely, and probably not return for a few days, as he thought change of air might be beneficial to his feverish attack ; and he therefore sent Williams back with the intelligence, in order that his father might not be uneasy at his lengthened absence. And look at Studley and

Hackfall he certainly did, but it was *à la distance*; and evening found him in the greengrocer's attic, luxuriating with Shirley over a mutton-chop, and consulting with him as to the best method of procuring an interview with Julia.

Lord Orville, in his impetuosity, and the unconsciously-indulged idea of his all-sufficiency to accomplish whatever he might desire, would have gone the next morning at once to Mrs. Crosby's rooms, given a loud rap, sent in his card, and requested a private audience of the young lady; but Shirley, thoughtless and unguidable in his own affairs, cool and cautious in his friend's, showed him the absurdity of such an attempt.

"I have ascertained how matters stand," said he. "Miss Courtney is entirely under the control of her guardians till she is of age. Master Nicholas never has his eyes off her for ten minutes together; his father would be glad enough of the match, if it should take place; his mother is determined it shall take place. If your lordship introduce yourself, in your own proper name and person, you will not be admitted a second time, depend upon that. It is better, therefore, to begin as you must end, and that is, by stratagem. I suspect the governess, or *dame de société*, *dame d'honneur*, or widow of one of Napoleon's generals, or whatever she may please to call herself, is one of those convenient persons whose guiding star is self-interest. Such people are good to deal with; one knows what one is about with them, and how to go to work. If she calculates that it will be for her interest that your Julia should marry Nicholas Crosby——"

"Confound his impudence and presumption!" exclaimed Lord Orville, by way of parenthesis.

"She will espouse his cause through thick and thin. If, on the other hand, she should find it more advisable, for that laudable end of serving herself, that your lordship should act the part of the successful rival,—and, by-the-by, Orville, what an incomparable comedy is Sheridan's 'Rivals!'—better than his 'School for Scandal.' Do you remember your acting Captain Absolute, when old Dole'em had walked off to bed?"

"Yes, and your Bob Acres; it was excellent; but go on,

go on."—"Well, then, if this prudent person should find out that it would be more profitable to her that her young charge should become Lady Orville."—"Oh!" ejaculated his lordship, in an extatic sigh.—"Then she will do anything, and everything that may be in her power, which is a good deal, to serve you, and put you in possession of the object of your wishes."—"By Jove!" exclaimed his lordship, "she shall have her reward; she shall be placed on full pay of general's widow, whether her husband were corporal or drummer, she shall always have brevet rank with me. So here's to her health, madame whoever she may be, and success to her and the cause."

And he tossed off a bumper of claret, and sent the green-groceress to the "Granby" for another bottle; and when it came he gave her a bumper of it; but the good woman only wondered, as she drank it, that such a nice gentleman had not ordered real port wine, instead of such poor washy stuff, that tasted for all the world as if it was half water.

Shirley, among other whims of a professional nature, had that of liking to appear under any other attributes than his own: being young and fair-complexioned, he delighted in assuming the garb and gait of the old; staining his cheeks of a spanish-olive, and hiding his sandy locks under a periwig black as the raven's wing, with mustachios or beard to match; not having any of his own to dispute precedence. Thus disguised he often took his seat at the public table, at the "Granby," the "Green Dragon," the "Crown," or the "Queen's Head," or wherever else the humour of the moment might prompt, as some rich old hunks, or outlandish foreigner, without awakening the slightest suspicion in any of the company, that he had exhibited himself to them, the night before, on the boards of the theatre. On these occasions he often heard his own merits discussed, and listened to the various criticisms upon them with a stoicism which would have done honour to Zeno himself. "How can one know oneself," he would sagaciously observe, "without one knows what is said of oneself?" Yet Shirley did not know himself after all, for nature never really meant him to be an actor. His readiness, nevertheless, in the assumption of character, was invaluable at the present juncture. The next morning, at an early hour, a bilious-looking old gentleman

might be seen slowly pacing up and down before the "Granby," with the aid of an ivory-headed cane, on which he leaned somewhat heavily. One inmate after another sallied forth from the hotel, to take their morning glasses at the well. They cast a passing glance upon him ; conjectured him to be some jaundiced nabob arrived from India to recruit his health ; wondered whether he would come to the "Granby," and whether he played at whist, and walked on : he composedly stood their gaze, still watching the out-comers, till he beheld Julia and her chaperon sally forth, and take their accustomed direction towards the well. He had some difficulty in restraining his steps to the pace he had assumed, till he was out of sight. He then flew, like feathered Mercury, to communicate his intelligence to Lord Orville ; equipped him, in all haste, with a great-coat, a pair of green spectacles, and a patent respirator, leaving nothing but the tip of his nose visible. He then tendered him the support of his arm, and led him up the well-walk, at the end of which stood his Julia, in deep mourning, pale and drooping, like a faded rose, waiting whilst Madame de Villebois was swallowing her three glasses of water, and exclaiming,—"*Ah mon Dieu ! Ah, que c'est dégoûtant ! Ah, quel mauvais goût ! Quelle odeur horrible, cela me rappelle les plaines de Jaffa, quand je me trouvais là avec le cher général !*" finishing her libations with such extraordinary contortions and shrugs, as brought a smile of other days upon poor Julia's lips.

"There, madame," said she, in a consoling tone, "it is all over now ; so we will have our nice walk on the moor ; this is the only time of the day that I enjoy."

Lord Orville's heart beat in double-quick time when he beheld her. He heard her silvery voice ; he darted forward, Shirley pulled him back, and in the sudden check they both stumbled, and Shirley came nearly upon Madame de Villebois ; he recovered his footing. "I hope I have not hurt you, madam," said he, taking off his hat. "Quite de reverse," said the lady, looking at him through her glass. Shirley continued to apologize ; his friend, he said, was in a very poor state of health, and had nearly slipped from sheer weakness. Madame de Villebois surveyed the friend also, or, rather, the tip of the friend's nose, saying, with a gracious smile, that she hoped he would find Harrogate do him good.

Shirley inquired her opinion of the waters ; upon which she gave a dissertation as to their qualities, and narrated their effects upon herself with a minuteness which none but a Frenchwoman would ever have thought of entering into. Whilst Shirley was listening to her, with a grave face and an air of the greatest attention, Lord Orville was endeavouring to catch the eye of Julia, to whom he was now so near that it required his utmost resolution not to snatch her hand. But his disguise was too effectual. Julia shrank from the obtrusiveness of an apparent stranger, and clung to the arm of Madame de Villebois, who, flattered with the attention of Shirley, observed not, or chose not to observe, that he and his invalid friend were accompanying her and Julia towards the moor. At last, coming to a somewhat retired path, Lord Orville could no longer restrain his impatience : off went his spectacles ; off went his patent respirator. "Julia !" he said, in a deep, low voice. She started, looked up, burst into tears, and threw herself into his arms.

"Capital situation !" thought Shirley, as he looked admiringly at them, "if it does but work well."

Still he felt anxious as to the effect.

"*O mon Dieu !*" shrieked Madame de Villebois, "what has arrived ! Miss Julia, why this sick gentleman pull off his spectacles to make you cry ?"

"Madam, I ought to apolo—" began Lord Orville, but Julia took the words out of his mouth.

"Dear Madame de Villebois," she sobbed out, "this is Lord Orville, my brother's most intimate friend. The last time I saw him was at home, with dear papa and mamma ; oh, I was so happy then !"

And her tears flowed afresh ; and Lord Orville now ventured to draw her hand through his arm, and to press it to his heart, and to intreat her, in a voice trembling with emotion, to be consoled, for his sake ; and Madame de Villebois thought it very natural that her dear pupil should be so much affected at the sight of Lord Orville, and much better for Lord Orville to take off his spectacles, and not hide his *beaux yeux*.

Shirley, adroitly hinting that the poor young lady's feelings would be relieved by her talking to her brother's most intimate friend about her papa and mamma gradually

contrived to fall into the rear, with Madame de Villebois ; and as soon as they were at a convenient distance, he resolved to play "a bold stroke for a wife" at once, by informing her of the situation in which Lord Orville and Miss Courtney stood to each other ; of his lordship's fixed determination to marry the young lady immediately, if possible ; and of his no less fixed determination to settle two hundred a year for life upon Madame de Villebois, or any other person, male or female, who should lend him useful and efficient aid in the matter, so as to bring it to the desired conclusion. Further explanation or further argument were alike unnecessary. Madame de Villebois was instantly convinced that Lord Orville was one of the very noblest of his noble *clique* ; that his friend, with whom she had the honour of conversing, was one of the most enlightened and most honourable of men ; and that it was her bounden duty to minister, as far as might be in her power, to the happiness of Miss Courtney, by aiding and abetting her to become Lady Orville as soon as possible.

But the Frenchwoman was as wary as she was vivacious. "*D'abord*," said she ; "we ought not be too long time, nor too close together, one another, now, this once. You give me the honour of your card. I conduct Mademoiselle Julie home, *pour le déjeuner*. When that finish, *alors* I do recollect one little thing we want for our *broderie* ; and I just run out, *toute seule*, for to find it ; and then I come to you, sare, and to *milor* ; and we talk of our little affairs, and we will be content all the both, *bien sure*."

Accordingly an appointment was made at a fashionable confectioner's, about half-way between the upper and lower divisions of Harrogate, where it was by no means uncommon for ladies and gentlemen to *happen* to hit upon exactly the *same hour* for going in to refresh themselves with ices or jellies. The gentlemen then, at Madame de Villebois' reiterated suggestions, took their leave, and turned towards the Queen's Head, Madame de Villebois and Julia continuing on their path to the Granby.

Poor Julia could not utter a word all the way—her heart was too full ; but Madame de Villebois abundantly made up for her silence by the volubility and warmth of her eulogiums on Lord Orville and his friend.

"I do not astonish myself any more," said she, "*cher cœur*,

that you do find *le pauvre enfant*, Monsieur Nicholas, so leetle to your taste. *Mon Dieu ! quelle différence entre lui* and this beautiful *milor* and his friend, whose name I have not the honour to know ; I would think he had lived in Paris all his day."

"Bless me, my dear," said Mrs. Crosby, when Julia took her seat at the breakfast-table, "I am sure Harrogate agrees with you. What a colour you have got ! What have you been about ?"

"I have had a long walk, aunt," Julia replied, with a very visible increase of the rosy glow which had so excited her aunt's amazement.

"Oh yes !" said Madame de Villebois, speaking even more quickly than usual ; "I drink one, two, tree glasses of de water ; then I make my young lady walk with me quick, quick, quick ! and that why the water do her good, and me good."

"It is very odd," said Nicholas, "that my cousin should get such a nice colour, and her eyes look so bright, just with walking before breakfast. I will go with you to-morrow morning, Julia, if you will let me ; perhaps it will do me good too."

Julia quaked at the prospect of his company, but his mother relieved her fears.

"Nay, Nicholas, you know it never agreed with you in your life, not even when you were a baby, to go out before breakfast ; you take after me—you are a poor creature."

Breakfast over, the ladies betook themselves to their embroidery, and Nicholas to his book, close at Julia's side.

"*Ah, que faire !*" exclaimed Madame de Villebois, rummaging her basket, with an air of the greatest interest ; "we have not more floss silk."

"Can I go out and get you some, madam ?" asked Nicholas.

"*Milles remerciements, cher ange* ; but the *shad*, the what you call it, the *nuance*, must be so exact as two leetle drops of water. I will just run, all myself."

"If you can wait till after luncheon for it, madam, we will go for it in the carriage," said Mrs. Crosby ; "for I think I shall venture out to-day with the windows drawn up, for the wind seems getting round to the south."

"Ah ! *Madame* is always *si bonne* ; but the way be not

one nice way ; and I desire to finish this *petit amour* of a rose before I eat one mouthful more of something."

So, up the lady started, and Julia, conscious of the real object of her errand, felt her heart beat so loudly, that she fancied its pulsations must be as audible to every one else in the room as they were to herself.

"Shall I go with you, madam?" asked Nicholas, who, to do the poor fellow justice, was at all times civil and obliging.

"No, not one little inch ; you must stay here, and make amusement to Mademoiselle Julie."

"I dare say she would rather I should go with you," said Nicholas, in a tone of reproach.

"No, indeed, I would not," said Julia ; "I had much rather you remained here." Then, struck with the earnestness of her manner, and conscious of the anxiety that had prompted it, she coloured deeply, and fixed her eyes upon her work.

Nicholas could not believe his ears ; it was the first time his cousin had ever expressed the slightest desire for his company. She seemed confused, too : perhaps she was beginning to be sensible of his love—to return it ! Poor Nicholas ! His mother soon left the young people to themselves ; as, indeed, she took every opportunity, at all times, of doing. Julia's eyes remained fixed upon the passion-flower she was shading, Nicholas's upon her. At last he ventured a little nearer to her.

"How pretty that flower is," said he.

"Yes, it is very pretty," said she ; then there was a pause.

"Everything you do, Julia, is pretty," he resumed.

"Is it !" she replied, very much as if she did not know what she was saying.

"Do you know why, cousin Julia?"

"Because I have pretty patterns and pretty materials, I suppose."

"No ; it is because everything you do is like yourself."

"Do not talk nonsense, cousin Nicholas."

"What shall I do, then ?—how can I amuse you ?"

"Read to me."

"What shall I read ?"

"Oh, anything : the book you were reading to yourself, when my aunt went out of the room."

"I am afraid you will think it dull."

"No, I shall not ;—what is it ?"

"It is 'Ricardo' on the Bullion Question."

"What is Bullion ?"

"Why, I scarcely know ; my father makes me read it, but it is very dry, and very difficult."

"Oh, it will do."

"No, Julia, it will tire you ; and then you will think it is I that am tiresome. I will look for something else ; some poetry—you like poetry, I know : here is Lord Byron."

"But I do not like Lord Byron."

"Why not, dear Julia ?"

"Because all his people are so wicked."

"But here is such a nice bit—about love."

"But I do not want to hear about love."

"Ah, Julia !"—and here the poor youth went off into a tirade, which we must entreat our readers to have the complaisance to imagine, as we have now a very different *tête-à-tête* to attend to ; viz., that between Madame de Villebois and Lord Orville, who, at the very moment that Nicholas was, for the twentieth time, beseeching, with tears in his eyes, Julia to promise to marry him one day or other, were discussing over pine-apple ices, in a private room at the confectioner's, whose name we would rather not mention, the most effective means of prevailing upon her to become Lady Orville as soon as might be.

Lord Orville had opened his conference with a statement of the perfect fitness of Miss Courtney, in every respect, to be his wife ; of the respectability of her family—equal in antiquity, though not quite in rank, with his own ; of the virtues of her parents, the universal estimation in which they were held in the country, and the moral and religious education she had received under their care ; of the talents and worth of her brother ; and her own beauty, amiableness, and incomparable graces. Lord Orville had never uttered so many wise aphorisms in all his life,—never felt himself one half so eloquent. Madame de Villebois was all attention, and he proceeded to animadvert upon the wonderful folly and obstinacy of his father, in objecting to a young lady every way so desirable, and his extraordinary absurdity and cruelty in pressing his son into an engagement with another

so exactly the reverse. He added various other arguments, of the greatest importance in his eyes,—as, indeed, people, in speaking of their own affairs, seldom think they have said enough if they have left anything unsaid; but he might have saved himself the trouble of every one of them, had he considered that at Madame de Villebois' time of life, all propositions end, generally speaking, in two considerations—Will it be to my interest to effect it? and, if so, how can it be effected? On both these points Madame de Villebois had made up her mind, in the first five minutes of her interview with the young nobleman. She might, therefore, like Midas, having resolved which way to give her judgment, have gone to sleep, whilst the cause was pleading; but a Frenchwoman never sleeps when anything of intrigue or interest is going on. So she continued to listen, with an air of the profoundest respect, throwing in the fitting interjections at fitting periods, and when Lord Orville fairly stopped for want of breath, she took up the theme, with all the volubility of her nation, re-echoed all Julia's praises, declared her to be dying for love of his lordship, "at the which," she added, "I should much surprise myself if it were otherwise, now that I have the honour to see *milor* himself." *Milor* bowed. She proceeded to say, that *chère Mademoiselle Julie* was tormented to death with the importunities of her cousin, who was *si bon, si bon, qu'il en était bête*, but a perfect *horreur* in love-making, insomuch that she was certain if Julia should remain six months longer at Crosby House she would fret herself to death; and Lord Orville's *beaux yeux noirs* filled with tears at the thought of his first love's early grave. She proceeded to inform him that Julia had received a letter from her brother at Florence, the week before, saying that he should shortly be in Paris, where he should request Mrs. Crosby to allow her to spend the winter with him, under the care of her aunt, Lady Maitland, who, with her daughters, would be in the same hotel with himself, and that he would come to England, for the purpose of taking her back with him.

"Now, if we can make Madame Crosby believe the brother already arrive," continued the manœuvring governess, "then very natural the sister set off to him, with her *dame de société, c'est moi*—who so proper to take care of her? and

then, very likely and natural, your lordship joins us on the road, with your *charmant ami*—four make much better party than tree, which can make nothing ; foolish number that tree, and then——”

And then in came the *charmant ami* himself, somewhat out of breath, for he had been detained at the theatre, rehearsing *Don Felix*, in “A Bold Stroke for a Wife,” and had run all the way from there to the confectioner’s.

“I have it !” he exclaimed, raising his fore-finger significantly to his seat of intellect, on hearing Madame de Villebois’ suggestion ; “leave the matter to me ;

‘Twere well it was done quickly ;’

I’ll manage it.”

“*Ah ! vraiment*,” exclaimed the delighted lady, *Monsieur est tout-à-fait Français*. The gentlemen in my country always do everything quick, quick ! but now I must go quick my own self, for my absence will come to make itself remarked.”

And so she took her leave, after appointing another meeting, the next morning, on the moor, instead of at the pump-room, and walked back to her charge, thinking very little about her, but a great deal about herself and her *joli appartement meublé sur les Boulevards, entre cour et jardin*, her box at the *Variétés*, and her *voiture* on fête-days, —all which she anticipated procuring with the promised reward of her talent for deception and intrigue.

The next day, and the next, the walk on the moor was repeated, with the happiest effects. Lord Orville and Julia walked before, Madame de Villebois and Shirley followed them at a respectful distance.

On the evening of the third day after the first interview between the lovers, as the Crosby family were sitting in that sort of twilight which old people generally think very agreeable, and young ones excessively tiresome, Madame de Villebois was informed that a person from Paris wished to speak to her. She went into the anteroom, and returned in about five minutes, with a foreign-looking personage, dressed in a travelling-cap with a tarnished gold tassel—which cap he respectfully doffed on entering ; a blue travelling-cloak, lined with faded red ; a gold-looking chain, crossing his figured velvet waistcoat ; and

two or three massive rings, of the same gold-looking material, on his fingers. He stepped forward with something of a military air, to which his moustaches and thick beard considerably contributed, and announced himself in French of a very peculiar accent, as the bearer of a letter from Mr. Courtney to Miss Julia Courtney—which letter was to the following effect :—

“ Place Vendome, Paris, &c.

“ MY DEAREST JULIA,—I arrived here a week ago, and I had meant, ere another week had elapsed, to have presented myself at Crosby House, to pay my respects to my uncle and aunt, and with their good leave to have withdrawn you for a few weeks from their kind protection, in order, as I wrote to you from Florence, to place you under the care of Lady Maitland, who is going to spend the winter here with your cousins.

“ Unfortunately, a friend of mine, riding an amateur race, two days ago, in the Champ de Mars, had a fall, by which his leg was broken, and as he is likely to be confined, in consequence, a couple of months to his room, I do not like to leave him all alone, among strangers.

“ Constantino, the person who will deliver you this letter, has been my courier from Italy, and is in every respect trustworthy and excellent. He goes to London with a family to whom I have recommended him, and will return to Paris immediately. If your aunt can make up her mind to part with you at so short a notice, it will be an excellent opportunity for you and Madame de Villebois, who will of course accompany you, to come to me at once. You can have the same travelling-chariot which he is to bring back, as it belongs to Meurice. It is warm and well hung. You can bring your own maid with you, if you wish it, but I strongly advise you to take a Parisian on your arrival. Lady Maitland knows a young person whom she can recommend as well educated, speaking her own language correctly, and with a pure accent, which will greatly facilitate your own acquirement of it, and, moreover, skilled in all the mysteries of the toilette.”

Then followed a few commonplaces to the Crosbys, and a number of kind things to Julia, the whole concluded and attested by the signature of Clement Courtney, in characters even larger and more legible than usual.

Great was the sensation this letter produced. Julia wept with joy at the thought of so soon seeing her brother again. Even Lord Orville himself faded from her eyes at that moment. Nicholas looked first at her, then at his mother, then at the courier, who stood bolt upright, in the attitude of “attention,” as if waiting for the word of command. Madame de Villebois fixed her keen eyes upon the elders, and Mr. Crosby put his hands into his breeches-pockets,

leaned back in his chair, stretched out his legs, and chinked his money.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Crosby, seeing her son's complexion changing from the primrose to the lily, "how very unlucky! What will you do, Julia?—you will not like to trust yourself with this odd-looking man, I should think!"

The slightest possible quiver might have been remarked by a very close observer, at the corners of the odd-looking man's mouth.

"Pardon me, *madame!*" interrupted Madame de Villebois, hastily, "I do not think him not odd-looking man at all. He look very good courier; he exactly like one very excellent *personne* travelled wid me, and *le cher Général*, up and down Egypt and Italy, thousands and thousands of miles."

"Mr. Courtney ought to know whether the man be trustworthy or not," said Mr. Crosby, "and you find he recommends him very strongly. Have you a certificate, my good man?"

The courier did not speak English. Madame de Villebois explained the question. Without moving a single muscle of his countenance he pulled out of his breast-pocket a long tattered roll of paper, with a variety of writing on it, somewhat difficult to decipher, purporting to be testimonials from Italian princes, Spanish dukes, German barons, Russian counts, French marquises, &c. &c.

It was very perplexing. The courier was requested to call again the next day at noon, and with a profound bow to each and every individual of the party, he withdrew, with the same imperturbable countenance with which he had entered. No sooner was the door closed after him than Mrs. Crosby returned to the attack on Julia.

"Why don't you speak, my dear? If you would like to go to your brother, why don't you say so?"

Thus questioned, Julia replied, in a firm tone, "Certainly, aunt; I should like it very much."

"Dear me! how very odd!" exclaimed her aunt.

"I knew she would," murmured Nicholas, as if to himself.

"And very natural, too," said Mr. Crosby, who was

at all times a matter-of-fact man. "It would have been a great deal more odd if she had said she would not like to see her brother,—when he, too, seems willing to pay all the travelling expenses."

"Dear me, Mr. Crosby! but you are so odd yourself! you never can see two sides of anything."

"Well, my dear, one side is enough, if it only be the right side."

"All the sides Mr. de Crosby see, are alway the right side," Madame de Villebois interposed; "but now *permettez-moi* to show you all my own leetle side: *Madame* look very pale; better not agitate her nerfs with talking this any more to night, at present; that will be sure hinder her sleep, and then to-morrow, to be sure, she have the attack gastrique. Cher Monsieur Nicholas, too, look very heavy with the eyes, and not at all pleasant and comfortable: better all take one, two, nice turns in de promenade-room, and see de company, and then to-morrow morning the *affaire* will settle itself."

"A very good notion of yours, madam," said Mr. Crosby; "I second it, with all my heart. I shall get a rubber, and perhaps Nicholas will persuade his cousin to dance a quadrille."

"I'm sure she won't dance with me," said Nicholas despondingly.

"Indeed I will, cousin Nicholas," said Julia, all spirits at the thought of so soon seeing her brother; "how can you think me so ill-natured?"

"I dare say it will be the last time," said Mrs. Crosby. She never spoke more prophetically.

CHAPTER XL.

FRENCH LEAVE.

THE next morning breakfast was kept on the table, one half-hour after another, yet neither Julia nor Madame de Villebois made their appearance.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Crosby, who was longing to bring forward again the discussion of the preceding evening,

"how tiresome they are! everything will be cold: the coffee, the eggs, the rolls—ring the bell, Nicholas! That foolish Madame de Villebois! she drags Julia about, through the grass, like a hen with one chicken. I wonder, at her age, she cannot sit still and keep herself quiet, as I do."

"I wish I had gone with them," said Nicholas; "I was thinking of it last night, when I went to bed; but this morning it seemed so cold, when I waked, that I lay thinking about it; and, somehow or other, I believe I fell asleep again."

"You did very right, my dear; it would do you good. Very likely you would have got your feet wet, if you had gone out; and then you would have got a sore throat: I always have a sore throat if I do but touch the grass in a morning."

"I wish I knew which way they had gone, though; I could go and meet them, at any rate."

"Well, my dear, you can do that, if you put your cork soles in your shoes. You know they always walk on the moor, and there you have all sun; only, take care of the wind; I fancy, by my arm, there is a little touch of east in it; and I will rest myself on the sofa till you come back."

So, on the moor went Nicholas; and on the sofa went his mamma, and there she lay, listening to the clock—eleven, twelve, one. In came the luncheon, in came Mr. Crosby, in came Nicholas, but no Julia, no Madame de Villebois. Nicholas had been everywhere he could think of, and had neither heard or seen anything of them. Where could they be? And where could the courier be?—for he had not come again, at the appointed hour. Neither Nicholas, nor his mother, nor his father, nor anybody else in the house could answer the question. But we can, and therefore we will inform our readers—who are, we hope, becoming exceedingly anxious on the subject—that they were actually, at that very moment of wonder and conjecture, half-way on their road to Gretna Green.

"Bless me!" say some of our lady-readers—for ladies are always more severe on the movements of their own sex than gentlemen are; "how very shocking! to make up her mind in such a little time! So, after all, she did not actually care one bit about seeing her brother." Well, but wait a

minute, dear ladies, ere you condemn our pretty little Julia—who, after all, was a mere child in judgment, compared to some of your more matured experiences,—and hear what a certain letter says, which was brought to Mrs. Crosby just as she was hesitating between cold chicken and warm jelly. It required no answer, the messenger said, and he had accordingly departed, without waiting for any.

“Dear me!” cried Mrs. Crosby; “it is Madame de Villebois’ writing! Perhaps Julia is ill—taken with a fainting, or some fit, perhaps on that nasty moor. Nicholas, give me my salts; I declare I am all in a tremble!”

“I feel in a tremble too,” said Nicholas; “papa, I will thank you for a glass of sherry.”

The envelope was opened: out came a billet from Madame de Villebois, and a billet from Julia. That of Madame de Villebois was read the first, in right of seniority, and was as follows:—

“MADAME,—I very much hope you will not condemn the one step I just come to take, which is to conduct, myself, Mademoiselle Julie to her brother, Monsieur Courtney, according to his great desire, and for that according to Mademoiselle Julie’s *volonté*, and *conséquemment*, according to my duty also. Mademoiselle Julie think it much more better not to take any leave—not to afflict Monsieur Nicholas; the great admiration of him make her very much sorry, because she never hope to return it, though it do her much honour. So she hope two, three month will conciliate him to her going away, and coming back like one sister which it would be very pleasant for him to have.

“We shall make one *voyage* very safely with our brave Constantino, who is one *modèle* of a courier; but I, *moi-même*, have no fear to *voyage* all over the universe, having so much followed the regiments in the days of *mon cher Général*, and *le grand Napoléon*.

“I owe you *mille remerciements*, *madame*, for all your *amiabilité* and *politesse*, and to Monsieur de Crosby and Monsieur Nicholas. The little bagatelle of salary for the quarter, due to me in three months from next Saturday week, Monsieur de Crosby will have the complaisance to remit to me through Lafitte, at the bank of whom I shall do myself the honour to call, *de temps en temps*, to inquire if the money should be arrive, and if there be one line for me come with it, to inform me of the health of your *gastrique*, and of your charming family. *En attendant*, *je vous prie*, *Madame et Monsieur de Crosby*, et le *charmant Monsieur Nicholas*, *d’agréer*, most highest consideration of,

“Madame, your devoted servante,

“MARIE ANGELIQUE THERESE DE VILLEBOIS,

“Née Pont-Arden.”

Mrs. Crosby was going to faint at the end of this epistle,

but Julia's yet remained. She therefore exerted herself to listen to it, as follows :—

“ MY DEAR AUNT,—I hope neither you nor my uncle will be angry with me for having followed Madame de Villebois' advice, which was, that I should set off for Paris, under the present favourable opportunity, as recommended by my dear brother. You appeared so averse, yesterday evening to my going, that I thought it would perhaps be better not to enter into any more discussion on the subject. Madame de Villebois told me, indeed, that in your delicate state of health I ought not to resume any conversation that might agitate your nerves, and above all, not to distress you by taking leave. She has shown me, also, that it would be more considerate in me towards my cousin Nicholas to withdraw myself, for a time, from his society, on account of the too partial regard he has manifested for me, and which you also, my dear aunt, were kind enough to wish me to return in a way which I am sure I never shall be able to do, though I shall always feel a sincere affection for him as your son, as well as being my dear mamma's nephew, and my own cousin.

“ I should be very sorry, my dear aunt, for you to think I have behaved ill on this occasion, the first of my life wherein I have had to decide for myself. I assure you that until the arrival—to me totally unexpected—of the courier, I had not the most distant thoughts of leaving your kind protection ; but my brother's desire to see me, and Madame de Villebois' arguments, overpowered my resolution ; and I can now only hope that by the time I write to you from Paris, which I shall do immediately on my arrival, any momentary feelings of displeasure my sudden departure may have occasioned will have entirely passed away from your mind : and so, with duty to my uncle, and love to my cousin, and thanks for all your kindness,

“ I am, my dear aunt,

“ Your affectionate neice,

“ JULIA COURTNEY.”

“ Well ! what a deceitful girl ! ” exclaim certain of our readers—females, of course ; “ downright wicked, I call it ! ” But pray, ladies, suspend your judgments. When Julia wrote that letter, she wrote nothing but what she believed to be the fact ; but before we enter into any further explanation respecting its contents, we must observe the effect they produced upon her uncle and aunt, and upon her cousin Nicholas, who looked, on the hearing of them, very much like an unlucky schoolboy who sees the pet bird he has been endeavouring all the half-year to tame suddenly break its string and fly away over his head.

“ What a dreadful thing ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Crosby, throwing herself on the sofa, and applying her vinaigrette to her nostrils. “ All the country will get to hear of her leaving us

in this way, and they will think we have used her ill. Mr. Crosby, pray run yourself directly to the posting-houses, and see what horses have gone off this morning—perhaps we may be able to stop them, or to send after them !”

“Would it not be better, my dear,” said Mr. Crosby, very calmly, and taking up his knife and fork again, “to consider first whether it may be advisable to stop them? It is pretty clear that Julia herself is tired of Crosby House—depend upon it, that is at the bottom of all her illness. Her brother guesses, I dare say, that she has had enough of us—very likely she may have written to tell him so,—he very kindly sends for her. Madame de Villebois has been all agog to get to Paris ever since the thing was mentioned, and on the very first chance of carrying her point, she, like an artful French jade as she is, persuades Julia into this silly clandestine way of setting off all in a hurry, for fear we should clap a spoke in the wheel, and keep her till her brother could come for her himself.”

“Yes, Mr. Crosby, that has been it, sure enough, and a very silly disgraceful step it is, as you say. I shall leave Harrogate directly, for I know everybody will be talking about us.”

“Why, my dear, as to that, if we hold our own tongues, most likely nobody will trouble their heads about the matter, or, indeed, need know anything about it. We can say the truth, and that is that an opportunity unexpectedly presented itself for her to go to Paris, to spend a few months with her brother. And, after all, her going away with an old woman, begging her pardon for calling her so, her governess (a fine governess, truly !), is not like her running off with some harum-scarum fellow of a young man.”

“No, dear child ! she is too innocent, and has too much the look of her mother, ever to do anything of that sort, I am sure ; or to think of anything of the kind. It would have broken my heart if there had been anything of love in the case ; I should always be fancying my poor sister Courtney would be getting out of her grave to upbraid me for having taken such bad care of her child.”

It was accordingly agreed among the Crosbys that they should keep the matter to themselves, and go out as usual ; which they did for another week, when, finding that they

were neither looked at nor talked about more than before, they returned to Crosby House with a large stock of Harrogate water bottled up for their own private drinking. Nicholas tried to divert his mind from dwelling upon his absent cousin by resuming the study of the bullion question. Mrs. Crosby embraced the Homœopathic system, and Mr. Crosby walked about his "paternal acres," and gazed upon his bullocks, and calculated his incomings and outgoings as heretofore. But we must not forget that all this is an episode. Now, episodes ought not, according to established rules of proportion, to go beyond a single chapter, and here, behold, we have run into a third. It frightens us to look at it, and yet its subject-matter is not half done ; so we must devote one more to Julia and her lover.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE ELOPEMENT.

LORD ORVILLE had pressed Julia, in their very second interview, to a secret and immediate marriage with him ; but she could not bear the idea of contracting so solemn, so indissoluble an engagement, without the knowledge and consent of her brother. "When Clement returns," said she, blushing as she spoke,

"Celestial rosy red,
Love's proper hue ;"

"or, if I should go to Paris, and you should come whilst I am there——" She stopped, and raised her eyes to him with an appealing eloquence that besought him not to urge her further. But this proposition, though he admired and loved her all the more for the sense of duty and propriety it denoted, by no means suited his lordship's views. He knew very well that Courtney, whether he should return to England or remain in Paris, would never consent to Julia's marriage with him—not even after he came of age, so long as the Earl of Maltravers should withhold his approbation of the union ; nor could he hope to be absent from Maltravers Hall for more than a few days at a time, without awakening suspicion

in his father's mind ; and he was certain that should a marriage contracted in his minority be discovered by the earl he would immediately cause it to be set aside. This danger, at any rate, he might have obviated, simply by waiting till he was of age : but Lord Orville never had waited, and moreover thought that Lord Orville never ought to wait for anything he wished to attain.

That same morning Madame de Villebois found, on looking at the silk she had bought the day before, that she had mistaken the "shad." She therefore sallied out again alone, and at precisely the same hour, to rectify the error, according to her own statement of her errand. Chancing to take the confectioner's *en route*, she found out that an ice strawberry would be very refreshing, at that precise moment ; she accordingly entered, and in the inner-room, by wonderful sympathy of taste, she found Shirley with two glasses of the tempting material that instant placed before him. With the discussion of their ices came the discussion also of the plan of Shirley, which ended in the appearance, that evening, of Constantino, the courier at Crosby House. No sooner was Madame de Villebois alone with Julia, in her bedroom, than she opened the full battery of her arguments with her pupil respecting their immediate departure for Paris. In general it is very easy to convince the judgment when the will is on the same side of the question. Still Julia hesitated and trembled. She longed to see her brother ; she should be miserable to be kept away from him—to have to pass the long dull winter at Crosby House—to see Lord Orville no more, for many months, perhaps never ! But then her aunt would think it so unkind to leave her so abruptly ; perhaps it would make her ill.

"It will make her much worse ill," said Madame de Villebois, "to see that *pauvre cher terrible* Monsieur Nicholas, fret himself into one atrophy, or tic-doloureux, with always looking at your beautiful face."

"Ah, madam, I dare say you are right ! I should indeed be grieved to let this opportunity of going to my dear brother escape me ; and perhaps it may be better to go away without saying good-bye to my aunt, than to vex her by persisting in going out of the house in open day, and in the face of every one, contrary to her wishes."

"Ah, now you are one dear *raisonnable enfant, cher cœur!* if you were one own daughter of me, I could not love you more better!"

"How kind you are, madame? how anxious for my happiness!" exclaimed Julia, as she threw herself into Madame de Villebois' open arms, and gave vent to her varied and contending feelings in a flood of tears. Madame de Villebois strained her to her breast, and whilst she held her there made a rapid calculation in her own mind of what was to be done regarding the preparations for the journey, and how many days might elapse ere the *bonâ fide* settlement upon her of two hundred a year for life might be placed in her own hands. Her first step was to prevail upon Julia to go to bed; her next, when she had seen her safely curtained up, to ascertain that the Crosbys also had retired for the night. She then descended to the *bureau* of the Granby, where she had a short interview with the courier, who was accompanied by a porter with a hand-barrow. She remounted the staircase, and in less than half an hour the courier and the porter departed, the hand-barrow laden with trunks, the greater number of which were to be placed in a warehouse for Madame de Villebois, under another name, till sent for: one small trunk of Julia's and a few packages were for the journey.

At break of day Madame de Villebois stood at Julia's bedside, with hot coffee. She then, herself all ready equipped for starting, assisted her to dress, hastening her as much as possible, in order to leave her no time for reflection. They then softly descended the stairs, and found the faithful Constantino waiting for them in the hall, talking to the night porter, who, accustomed to early departures, as well late arrivals, saw nothing extraordinary in the proceeding; and if he had, would speedily have merged his wonder into admiration and gratitude on seeing a sovereign remedy against tale-telling glittering in his hand as he opened the ponderous door to give the ladies egress.

Just out of sight of the front of the house was waiting not the warm and well-hung travelling chariot, but a post-chaise, which, from the splashes on its wheels and windows, appeared to have recently performed some of the stages that belonged to its vocation, as hack. Julia, however, saw nothing but

that it was the vehicle which was to take her to her brother, and procure her a parting interview with Lord Orville. She therefore sprang in, and was followed by Madame de Villebois, with somewhat less of external alacrity, though with more of internal *gaieté de cœur*. The attentive Constantino drew their cloaks over their knees, closed the door, jumped up into the dickey beside the driver, and away they set off. Madame de Villebois, satisfied so far with the progress of her machinations, and fatigued with her night's exertions, tied her shawl over her head, and was soon in a profound sleep, whilst Julia gave herself up to pleasing anticipations of meeting her brother.

When they had proceeded about eight miles, the chaise turned out of the high-road into a by-lane that led to a village, at the entrance of which stood a small inn,—or, as the landlord himself more properly called it, a public-house, made manifest to travellers as such by the sign of “The Three Jolly Pigeons,” from which it took its name, accompanied by information, on the same board that displayed their likenesses, that “good entertainment for man and beast” was to be had within.

Here Constantino made a halt, and respectfully informed the ladies that they had arrived at the place where they were to breakfast.

“Where are we come?” said Madame de Villebois, waking up, and instinctively arranging her curls. “*Ah, mon Dieu!* I was dreaming of the Palais-Royal; I thought we were all just going into Véry’s.”

So saying, and rubbing her eyes, and folding her shawl around her in the ineffable folds which, according to their own account, only Frenchwomen can ever achieve, she alighted, as did Julia, and together they went into the little parlour, with

“Nicely-sanded floor,”

and six oaken chairs, and large round table of the same material, on which, nevertheless, was laid out a *déjeuné*, actually more as if it had started from the *cuisine* of Monsieur Véry than from beneath the wings of the “Three Jolly Pigeons.” Not only did it display the tea, coffee, eggs, ham, rolls, cakes, butter, cream, &c., which, in England, a little roadside inn could, at the time we are treating

of, exhibit in the neatest order, but also cold pies, potted game, savoury jelly, and sundry other little elegancies, which, it was pretty evident, were articles hitherto unknown to the family bill of fare. Julia could not help testifying her surprise at finding the table thus set out, and with flowers too! Madame de Villebois did not appear surprised at all,—indeed, it was all accounted for by the appearance of Lord Orville himself, who had arrived at the “Three Jolly Pigeons” the night before, with a well-packed basket from Harrogate, in order to make sure that the ladies should find everything in readiness for them, and comfortable, on their arrival.

How happy was Julia at the sight of him! What smiles! what blushes! what a delightful breakfast it would be! To be sure, they must part directly after; but that she would not think about.

“May I ask, ladies,” said Lord Orville, “if you would have any objection to Constantino’s sitting down at table with us?”

“Not the least in the world,” said Julia; “that is, if Madame de Villebois does not object to it.”

“*Moi, mon ange!* I very often breakfast with one courier, when I was voyaging with *le cher général*. In France, the *conducteur* always sit down with the *voyageurs*, to take care of the ladies.”

“In the present instance,” said Lord Orville, with a significant smile at Madame de Villebois, “I should think there will be no objection from any one; and here he is.”

And in walked Mr. Shirley, sans beard, sans moustaches, sans travelling-cap, sans travelling-cloak, sans credentials, sans everything that had pertained to his performance of Constantino, “being his first appearance in that character.”

Lord Orville’s fear of the marriage which, with boyish impatience he could not bear the thought of delaying, being discovered, impelled him, very contrary to his natural disposition, to observe the utmost caution and secrecy in everything connected with it. It was not the case with this, as with most secret marriages, that, when once achieved, the necessity of secrecy is over. He knew very well that his marriage would never be acknowledged by the earl, as long as there might remain a possibility of setting it aside. It

was, therefore, absolutely necessary that it should remain concealed, not only from the earl, but from the Crosbys, and every other person who might have even a remote knowledge of any of the parties concerned, more especially from Courtney, whose high sense of honour would lead him warmly to resent any attempt on Lord Orville's side to renew the acquaintance with his sister. In this dilemma Shirley came to the rescue. He first made it a condition with Lord Orville that he should ask no questions, but trust *entirely* to the genius of his adviser to effect the interview with Julia in which he hoped to overcome her scruples.

Now Shirley would have scorned a lie, in what he might deem a matter of honour, as much as the bravest knight in Christendom would have done in the proudest days of chivalry ; but in love and war, he held it, all stratagems were fair. His brain was as fertile in plots as Lopez de Vega's, who invented four hundred dramas, without ever repeating himself in any one of them ; and the bare mention, by Madame de Villebois, of Julia's having received a letter from her brother, relative to her joining him at Paris, instantly inspired him with the happy idea of forging another in the same name, and presenting it himself in the character of Constantino, the courier, to be trusted to the world's end. It was easy for Madame de Villebois to procure him one of Courtney's epistles to his sister, wherefrom to imitate the handwriting. The result has appeared ; nor need we dwell upon the success of Lord Orville's persuasions, backed by Madame de Villebois' arguments, upon a girl in love with all the fervour of a first attachment, and with the alternative, moreover, of returning to Crosby House if she did not go on to Gretna Green. We seldom analyze very narrowly either arguments or actions which tend to the gratifications of our wishes. In the mercenary and dishonourable conduct of Madame de Villebois, Julia saw nothing but an ardent desire to secure the happiness of her pupil, which led her generously to risk her own interests, and disregard the censures of the world ; in Shirley's forgery of her brother's writing, and false impersonation of his courier, only a zeal to serve Lord Orville, which had hurried him into means not quite justifiable, perhaps, in themselves, but by which she

felt certain he meant no harm ; and as for Lord Orville himself, true he was proposing a measure to which he acknowledged his father was entirely opposed—a father, too, who on every other occasion had treated him with unlimited indulgence ; but then it was love that prompted him to this first act of disobedience—love to herself ! she was sure it would be his last, his only opposition to his father's wishes. And then who could study his happiness, could minister to it as she would do ! and how dreadful it would be, should they agree to separate now, if anything should occur to separate them for life !

So argued within herself the girl in love ; whilst the woman of the world, reading all that passed within her breast, as in a spotless mirror, and intent herself only on her promised two hundred a year, of which additional stimulus to her eloquence Julia knew nothing, strengthened all Lord Orville's arguments, and brought forth sundry additional ones of her own, with an ingenuity and volubility that would have done credit to any Old Bailey pleader, well paid

“To make the worse appear the better reason.”

The result was, that one hour after breakfast, the whole party were on the high north road—not galloping away with four horses at so furious a rate as to awaken in every passer-by, and at every place they stopped at, a suspicion of their errand, as is usually the unwise custom on similar occasions, but simply like other every-day travellers, going on in a regular trot, and coolly ordering “chaise forward” at the accustomed stages. Not that Lord Orville's impatience at all approved of this ; he would gladly have said,—

“Gallop apace, ye fiery-footed steeds,”

but Madame de Villebois had good reasons of her own for being as anxious to elude observation as the young couple could be ; she therefore laboured hard to convince Lord Orville that the best way of doing so was to avoid any singularity that might attract attention. So far, Shirley had managed the matter admirably. He had found the day before, in the course of his inquiries at the “Hawk and Hound,” that a chaise, which had brought a party from

York in the afternoon, was going to return to that most ancient, dull, and venerable city early the next morning. He engaged the driver to give him a lift, as he expressed it, along with his mother and sister, as far as the "Three Jolly Pigeons," a house which Shirley had often reconnoitred in the course of what he was pleased to term his "dramatic rambles." The man, or *lad*, as the Jehu is technically called on the road, albeit he may have turned his grand climacteric, willingly complied, deposited the whole party, as we have seen, under the wings of the "Jolly Pigeons," received five shillings for his complaisance, touched his hat, cracked his whip, and was off again, without further "let or hinderance;" for Shirley took good care to stand at the door till he had fairly turned the corner of the lane, in order to make sure that he should not enter into gossip with the people of the house. Lord Orville, meanwhile, had sent to Knaresborough for a chaise, and, as soon as ever it arrived, the whole party set off for the "Land of Promise."

"And now," said Madame de Villebois, "remember we do all travel like one family, and nobody see anything remarkable in one of us. Mr. Shirley"—who had now mounted in front, in a plain livery—"Mr. Shirley pass for my own body-man; you, *milor* and Mademoiselle Julie, for brother and sister—you is like as two little pea, two little bright drops of de morning dew on *deux fraiches feuilles de rose*,—and I your eldest sister. Nobody suspect any love in the matter, nobody trouble their heads about us."

There was never any lack of worldly wisdom in Madame de Villebois' mode of viewing things, and on the present occasion her judgment was more clear-sighted than ever. It was not without its influence on Lord Orville, and it might form a singular record in the annals of Gretna Green, that the most soberly-organized party that ever entered it in search of the hymeneal Blacksmith was one under the guidance of a superannuated French coquette and a strolling player.

Poor Julia wept bitterly as she stood before the Vulcan, and thought of her own village church, and the venerable minister, who had baptized her brother and herself, and read the funeral service over her dear parents; her beloved brother, too, far away, and little thinking that at that very

moment the sister whom he so fondly loved was about to withdraw herself for ever from his protection, and to transfer to another the right to guide and direct her for the remainder of her life.

Lord Orville, was conscious of a pang at his heart, such as he had never felt before, as he reflected that he was on the point of committing a deliberate act of disobedience against a most indulgent father, whose whole happiness centred in him, and that this act must necessarily involve him for many months to come in continual deception and anxiety. Madame de Villebois saw the cloud that came over his brow, and trembled for her annuity ; fortunately, however, or unfortunately, according as the result might prove, the blacksmith, in the clerical character as well as in his own, made a point of striking while the iron was hot, with such rapidity as to leave very little time for either consideration or repentance ; and almost ere the young couple had exchanged a look of tender sympathy, an encouraging pressure of the hand, they were pronounced man and wife !

Then the chill at Lord Orville's heart changed to the holy glow of wedded love ; then were the tears on Julia's cheek dried up by blushes of delight ! Nothing now could separate her from the idol of her young heart ! Lord Orville embraced her in transport ; he embraced Madame de Villebois, who returned his salute with interest, on both cheeks, and he was very near embracing Shirley too, but Shirley begged leave to salute the bride instead, after which he requested permission to extend his happiness to Madame de Villebois, who declared it *incroyable*, and prognosticated all manner of felicities to the new-married pair.

Lord Orville, in the fulness of his gratitude to Madame de Villebois for her services, drew forth from his pocket-book, the first year's two hundred pounds, and placed it in her hands, along with his promissory note for the payment of the same sum to her annually during her life. We spare our readers her *remerciments*. Julia simply thought it kind and generous in her dear lord ; that it was a preconcerted bargain, never entered her head. Lord Orville would fain have pressed the same sum upon Shirley, the first moment they were alone, but Shirley would not hear of it. Lord Orville was almost angry : "Why should you refuse a

friend?" said he. "You say your father will give you nothing whilst you are leading this itinerant sort of life, and you know very well my heart and my purse are alike open to you at all times."

"I am sure of it, my dear lord," replied Shirley, affectionately proffering him his hand; "but with me the heart and purse are separate accounts. I never draw upon them both at once. Every man has his whim. I have mine; and one of them is to wear a coat patched at the elbows, if need require it, rather than run in debt, or incur a pecuniary obligation. My father will not offer me a dump whilst I am running about the country, *disgracing* myself, as he calls it, not seeing my graces. He has a right to do what he will with his money, and to keep it back if he likes, for it is all his own, and of his own honest making; but I know very well that if I were to write to him to-day, to ask him for fifty pounds, I should have it by return of post; ay, and with right good will, too; but, to say the truth, I feel no claim upon him whilst I run counter to his wishes. Nevertheless, were a moment of actual necessity to overtake me, I should not be too proud to draw either upon him or upon your lordship."

Madame de Villebois, untroubled by scruples of any kind, no sooner felt the cash, and the precious document which insured its renewal, safe in her pocket, than she resolved upon securing an immediate retreat with it to Paris. She therefore took leave of the bride and bridegroom at "cannie Edinburgh," and trusting herself and her treasure fearlessly on the waves, she went from Leith to London by sea, in order to elude the possibility of pursuit by land. She then proceeded immediately to Boulogne, by a sailing packet, and in a few hours had the pleasure to find herself safely landed on French ground, where, however, her misdoings speedily met their reward. Always boasting of her pension, which she gave to understand was for essential services rendered by her, at the congress, to certain illustrious characters in matters that required extraordinary sagacity and tact, she soon attracted the notice of an accomplished *roué*, who managed, by the aid of an assumed title, and forged deeds, to cajole her into matrimony; and though she had previously *stipulated* that she should have her darling pension reserved

for her "sole separate use and maintenance," he contrived, every quarter-day, to obtain sole possession of the portion due, by arguments more *striking* than words.

As for Shirley, he returned to Harrogate, to

" ——— fret and strut his hour upon the stage,"

and Lord Orville and Julia sheltered themselves from observation and inquiry in a secluded cottage, on the Scottish moors, where they passed their honeymoon as happy as Paul and Virginia upon their solitary island.

But term-time drew near; it was requisite that Lord Orville should present himself *in propria persona* before his father, to whom he had regularly written, with plausible excuses for his lengthened absence, previous to his returning to Cambridge. And now began his first perplexity. What was he to do with Julia? Shirley met them at York to hold a council on the subject. "Trust Lady Orville to me," said he. "Your lordship must go to your father, and I will insure her ladyship a home with mine, if she will honour our humble roof so far as to accept it, where she will be as safe from impertinent curiosity as she was upon the moors."

Julia assured him she should be most grateful for any asylum that kept her near her husband; and as she spoke, she put her pretty little hand into his, and her eyes filled with tears, at the thought of separation from him, though only for a few days. Lord Orville kissed them away, and her ready smiles returned, and shone through the dispersing drops, like sunbeams through an April shower.

"How well," thought Shirley, as he looked at them, "they would do as Ferdinand and Miranda."

But he had no time for contemplating. Ever prompt in his movements, he left York that evening, and presented himself before his parents, just as they were quietly sitting down to supper; that old-fashioned, but most sociable of meals. Delighted to see him again, they once more forgave him all his freaks, in the hope that he had seen the error of his ways, and was now going to stay with them, and to initiate himself, at last, into the mysteries of stewardship and land-surveying. It was neither his intention nor his interest to argue the point with them, at that moment, and he very effectually diverted their attention from it by im-

parting to them, under a solemn promise of secrecy, the marriage of Lord Orville. Greatly were the worthy couple dismayed when they heard that his lordship had taken such an important step without the concurrence or knowledge of his father. They were somewhat comforted, however, when they heard whom he had selected as the partner of his future destiny, the sharer in his rank and possessions ; for Mr. Shirley was well acquainted with the history, as well as with the estates, of nearly all the nobility and gentry in the county, and knew how high a place the Courtney family had always held among them.

"Lord Orville wished me to confide his secret to you and my mother," continued Frank Shirley, "as he considered it as safe with both of you as if he kept it locked up in his own breast."

"Dear creature !" cried Mrs. Shirley, "it is just like him ! I do believe he feels for me as if I was really his mother ; and I am sure he is just like another son to me, and always will be, married or single, for all he's a lord."

Mr. Shirley also professed himself honoured by his lordship's confidence ; but he found, the minute after, that, like all other honours, this had its attendant inconveniences ; for Frank went on :—

"Well, dear mother, then as you look upon Lord Orville as your son, you must, of course, look upon Lady Orville as your daughter ; and a very pretty and amiable daughter you will find her, I can assure you."

"Ah, my dear Frank, that is quite another thing. She has not been nourished at my breast as he has. I can never expect her to be so loving and condescending, running in and out of the house, just as if it was his own home."

"There you are mistaken, dear mother. You will see her, I hope, in a very few days, as much at home with you as his lordship is, and running in and out of the house like a kitten."

"What *do* you mean, Frank ?" exclaimed his mother, with that strong emphasis on the little auxiliary verb *do* which always denotes astonishment.

"What *can* you mean, Frank ?" exclaimed his father, with a somewhat angry stress on the auxiliary.

"I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver,"

Frank began, spreading out his hands as if he was addressing the pit. A hasty "Pshaw!" from his father brought him back to plain prose, and, quickly ensconcing his hands in his breeches-pockets, he very lucidly set forth that his lordship believed himself in duty bound to spend a few weeks at Maltravers Hall, previously to resuming his *studies*—Frank could scarcely help smiling as he tried gravely to pronounce the word—at Cambridge.

"To be sure he ought," said Mr. Shirley. "The earl is breaking fast."

Frank proceeded to explain, that as taking Lady Orville with him was impossible, and to leave her among strangers still more so (young people, by the bye, think nothing of a few degrees beyond impossibility), his lordship had, very naturally, turned his eyes towards his foster-mother, in the full confidence that for his sake she would receive Lady Orville kindly, for the short time he should remain at the hall. "When he goes to Cambridge," continued Frank, "he will take some retired place for her in the neighbourhood, under another name, and thus, between one and the other, he trusts he shall be able to conceal his marriage till he is of age, which, as you know, will be in the course of the present year, and then he will declare it immediately, to his father, and to the world."

Mrs. Shirley readily promised a kindly welcome, as far as she was concerned, to the young lady, and every comfort the house could afford.

"To whom, indeed," she said, "could his lordship look with so much confidence as themselves? By whom could his wife be taken such care of as by herself?—who would love her, begging her pardon for saying so, as if she were her own daughter?"

Women always jump to a conclusion, but Mr. Shirley was "perplexed in the extreme," as Frank repeated to himself, in a tone savouring something of Kean and something of Macready; whilst he looked upon his father's puzzle-pated countenance. It was, indeed, a perplexing position that the old gentleman stood in at that moment. If he opposed the young lord's desire, he incurred his resentment, which would most likely show itself as soon as he became his own master.

by choosing another steward ; if he complied with it, and the secret should transpire, immediate dismissal by the earl, even if he repented it on his deathbed, would be the certain consequence. But then he should retain Lord Orville as his friend, and his lordship would be certain to reinstate him in his office. The Earl of Maltravers, moreover, was seventy-six years of age, and a martyr to a complication of diseases. Lord Orville was twenty, and to all appearance likely to live fully as long as his father had, whose life was not, in fact, worth three months' purchase. Ergo it was fifty-six years of stewardship, which would only bring Mr. Shirley to the patriarchal age of a hundred and ten, against as many days, that he had got to consider. It was a question soon calculated. And then, as nothing is more easy than to find arguments ready to enlist under the banners of interest, he began to argue with himself that as Lord Orville had positively determined to marry so young, with or without the consent of his father, it was well that he had married so wisely, that the match in itself, though not so splendid as many as his rank and fortune might have entitled him to, was one to which the earl could not reasonably make any positive objection.

"At any rate, if I please Lord Orville now, he will continue me in my stewardship after his father's death."

Such was the summing up of Mr. Shirley's arguments. Madame de Villebois herself could not have arrived at a more prudent conclusion, and, in sooth, the stewardship was well worth preserving, bringing in, as it did, a clear fifteen hundred a year, with a comfortable residence attached to it, sheltered by some of the tallest and oldest trees in the park, and combining, in its appurtenances, that happy mixture of farm and villa which has always appeared to our English eyes and English feelings as the very perfection of English country life.

To Beech Cottage then, as this pretty place was named, it was settled that Frank should bring Lady Orville in the family vehicle which conveyed his papa and mamma to church every Sunday, and which had the advantage of a capacious head, which could equally seclude those within-side from observation, or protect them from the rain ; and that Lord Orville should send for his horses to meet him at York, and proceed to the hall alone as usual. It was, more-

over, agreed that Lady Orville should pass under the name of Shirley, for a niece of Mr. Shirley's come on a visit for a change of air on account of her health, which would account, to the very few neighbours who might hear of her arrival, for her seldom going beyond the garden-gate.

As for Lord Orville he had been so accustomed, from a child, to familiar intercourse at the cottage, that it was easy for him to renew his almost daily visits without exciting the smallest observation whatsoever; and thus he enabled to spend every hour with his Julia that he could spare from attendance on his father. And so it was. Julia came and delighted the good couple by her beauty, her vivacity, and the affectionate artlessness of her manners. Happy as a bird among the flowers and shrubs, she beguiled the hours that divided her from her husband, with planning the little fairy wardrobe, which Mrs. Shirley's matronly experience pronounced would be called for in the course of a few months. And whenever Lord Orville found her thus employed, he felt his love for her, and his anxiety to guard against the possibility of his marriage being set aside, increased tenfold. He rejoiced when the time arrived for his return to college, because he should there be out of the immediate sphere of the earl's observation. Frank Shirley, whose erratic engagements had brought him to Cambridge a week before, had found him a neat, small house on the outskirts of the town, where Julia was quietly domiciled still under the name of Shirley, which name Lord Orville also assumed, as her husband, whenever he could evade, as he found abundant means of doing, the vigilance of his tutor, and other appointed guardians of the morality and virtue of the youths committed to their care; with what success we do not pretend to say, at any rate, not at present; for lo! we behold our chapter extending so far beyond the limits to which we had intended to confine it, that for very shame we must begin still another.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE LOST ONE FOUND.

WHILST the youthful couple were thus enjoying themselves with all the thoughtlessness which so often draws down upon young people the imputation of intense selfishness, when it is, in fact, mere want of reflection, the Crosbys were lost in amazement at Julia's silence, week after week, and month after month. "It was so ungrateful!—so unkind! Even had she been a mere acquaintance, common civility required her to write to them, after her having been so long under their roof! And Madame de Villebois, too! Where was her boasted *politesse*, never to take the trouble to send them a single line, to acquaint them of Julia's safe arrival in Paris!" Nor did Clement Courtney escape in the general vote of censure: "he might have written, and ought to have done so, in fact, as soon as he had seen his sister; but, perhaps, he had taken it for granted that his sister had written, or his letter might have miscarried, or perhaps hers." Altogether, it was very strange, and very abominable, and impeded Mrs. Crosby's digestion very much, and gave Nicholas a swelled face.

But what was the astonishment of the whole party when, one day, Clement Courtney presented himself before them, and, almost before the first greetings of welcome were over, casting his eyes eagerly round the room, inquired, with all the impatience of affection, for Julia. Poor Mrs. Crosby fainted in good earnest, on finding that he thought her still where he had left her, under her aunt's protection. Upon her recovery, an explanation ensued, painful to her to give, most grievous to Clement to receive. The forgery of the letter in his name, the assumed character of the *courier*, was all now laid open. It was evident that Madame de Villebois must have been influenced by the basest motives, to betray the trust reposed in her, and to connive at, most probably to prompt, Julia's imprudent, and, as it appeared to her aunt, most unaccountable, flight.

Bitterly did Clement reproach himself for having left his sister, at her ductile age, so entirely to the influence of a *stranger*, and that stranger a Frenchwoman; for he knew

that the infirm state of Mrs. Crosby's health, and the feebleness of her general character, must render her protection of a lively and inexperienced girl little more than a mere appearance. Not that he, for one instant, doubted the purity of Julia's principles, the innocence of her heart; but innocence itself sometimes leads astray, and he would have had a thousand worse fears than those which tormented him already, had he not internally felt a conviction that Lord Orville was connected with her elopement, and of Lord Orville's honour he was as certain as of his sister's virtue. Still, the idea of a secret marriage having taken place between them was inexpressibly wounding to his feelings; a marriage already objected to by the Earl of Maltravers, and which, if he should discover it before his son came of age, he might set aside, and brand the fruits of it with the stain of illegitimacy. And then, if anything should happen to Lord Orville himself, in the interim, what would be the situation of Julia? Nor was Clement quite sure that, even looking at it in the brightest light, he should have rejoiced in the marriage, even had it been celebrated under the happiest auspices. Lord Orville's character was, as yet, entirely unformed; it was devoid of any peculiar trait, good or bad. It gave promise of amiability, but it might be of

"Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear;"

and, moreover, who could say what impression might be made upon it by more enlarged intercourse with the world of fashion and dissipation, which, thus far, he had not even had a glimpse of; for his education, till he went to college, had been of so singular a nature as to leave him alike ignorant of books and of mankind? All these considerations passed in dark review through the mind of Clement Courtney, as, after having taken an affectionate leave of his relatives, and endeavoured to inspire them with brighter hopes than he himself entertained, he turned his horse's head towards Harrogate, resolved to trace, if possible, the route which Madame de Villebois and Julia had taken, and to find out who had been the companion of their flight, for that they had travelled unaccompanied, he felt persuaded had not been the case.

At Harrogate, however, he gained no information likely to throw any light upon his path. No foreign courier, or

travelling-carriage had put up at any of the hotels or inns about the time he specified ; nor had horses been supplied at an early hour, or in a secret manner, to any parties answering the description of Madame de Villebois and Julia. One of the waiters at the Granby, however, said that he had one day heard an outlandish sort of a man talking to an oldish lady, rather painted up, something about going to France, but he had not taken any particular notice of what they said. Yet, even this slender clue was enough to induce Clement to retrace his steps to Paris, and to apply to the police there to assist him in his search after Madame de Villebois. That skilful widow of the general, however, could have outwitted him, and fifty officers of the police into the bargain, she having left France under one name, resided in England under another, and returned under a third.

After wasting some weeks at Paris, in harrassing and fruitless inquiries, Clement returned to England, and immediately went into the neighbourhood of Maltravers Hall, in order to hear from the landlord of the Maltravers Arms, if Lord Orville was then at the hall. After ordering a much better dinner than he cared about, and making a very moderate inroad into it, he invited the landlord to assist him in the finishing of a bottle of port, which would have reflected no disgrace on the cellars of Maltravers Hall, from which, indeed, it was not impossible it might have found its way, by some strange inadvertence or absence of mind on the part of the butler, to the Maltravers Arms: be that as it might, its end in aiding the inquiries of Clement Courtney, was fully manifested in the increasing loquacity of the landlord, after every glass of the "liquid ruby" which he appropriated to himself, first duly holding it up to the light, to admire the depth, yet clearness of the colour, with just a *souppçon* of beeswing floating on the surface.

In this social half-hour's intercourse, Clement learned that Lord Orville had been away most of the vacation, on the moors, upon a shooting excursion ; that he had returned towards the latter part of the season, on account of the declining state of the earl's health, and that he had scarcely been seen beyond the walls of the park all the time he had stayed

"He is uncommon dutiful," said the landlord, "so if you

please, sir, I will propose his health,—and no offence, I hope. They did reckon him a little wildish at one time, running about the country with Squire Shirley's son ; but now he seems quite steady, and some say he is going to be a great scholar ; but that is neither here nor there, according to my way of thinking, with ancient noblemen like him, if they only make good landlords."

"And good husbands," thought Courtney, with a sigh ; for he could not separate, in his own mind, the idea of Julia from Lord Orville ; though he had heard nothing that could afford any reason to believe they were together. His next step was to proceed to Cambridge, nominally to keep his term, but in reality, to keep an eye on Lord Orville's movements, and gain a more thorough insight into his character.

On their first meeting, Lord Orville coloured deeply, and appeared ill at ease ; but this was natural enough, considering the circumstances under which they had last seen each other, with respect to Julia. He did not inquire after her ; but that might be accounted for in the same manner. Nevertheless, the friendship between the young men was renewed, though Lord Orville apologized for seeming to keep more to himself.

"The fact is," said he, "I want to make up for lost time. I have cut all my old associates, and they wonder what new crotchet I have got in my head."

Courtney wondered too : chance, however, one day brought it to light. He met Shirley in the street ;—he had frequently seen him during his visits at Maltravers Hall, and having always admired the good nature and good feeling that were evident in him amid all his eccentricities, he greeted him as cordially as usual ; but Shirley looked as embarrassed as his lordship had done, and coloured as deeply, and hesitated as long, before he put out his hand to meet Courtney's. His conscience tweaked him, and he felt he was "no actor there." Courtney attributed his apparent awkwardness to something of confusion at appearing before him as an acknowledged player, and thought no more of it, beyond the hope, at the moment, that he would have the good sense, ere long, to abandon his vagaries altogether. But Shirley could not forget the *rencontre*, and hastened to tell Lord Orville of it.

"I do not know what Courtney can think of me," said he; "I must have looked like a raw country bumpkin blushing up to the ears because the squire speaks to him; but I could not help it. On the stage I can 'smile and smile, and be a villain,' but off it I cannot take a man in to shake hands with me when I know he would rather knock me down if he knew I had taken the liberty to forge his hand-writing, and personify his courier."

"Oh, he will forgive us both, fast enough," said Lord Orville, "when he sees his sister installed at Maltravers Hall, as she ought to be. And, by-the-by, Shirley, do call in at that wine merchant's, there's a good fellow, and tell him to send the pale sherry: he forgot it yesterday, and it is the only wine Julia can fancy just at present."

Now Courtney, though steady enough for a young man of seven or eight thousand a year, was no anchorite in his cell. At the very moment that Lord Orville was asking Shirley to go to the wine merchant's, he was resolving to do the same thing, to make a critical selection from the cellars for some parties he was going to give in the course of the ensuing week. As he went into the shop he saw Shirley was coming out.

"Let that pale sherry go directly to Roseville Cottage," said the master to his foreman. "Mrs. Shirley ought to have had it yesterday."

"Pale sherry—a cottage—and a wife!" thought Courtney: "I fancied Shirley seemed altered; this accounts for it." Then, turning to the wine merchant, "I did not know that Shirley was married," said he; "does his wife perform?"

"No, sir, I do not think Mrs. Shirley acts," he replied. "I have never seen her name in the bills, and I know she is a very private lady."

Then with that amiable indecision which the townsmen can assume so well towards the gowmsmen, when they do not exactly know how much or how little they ought to appear acquainted with, he added, "there are two Mr. Shirley's, sir; I am not sure that Mr. Frank, the one that went out as you were coming in, is the married gentleman."

"And the other!"

"The other, sir, the other is Mr. Henry Shirley. I am not sure that he is the married one, either; they are both

of them very nice gentlemen, and very good customers. Will you please, Mr. Courtney, sir, to walk into the counting-house, and sit down, whilst I show you the samples, sir."

"I will put down my order," said Courtney; and two steps brought him into the counting-house. The wine merchant was just following him, when some one darted hastily in, and inquired if the wine had been sent. The voice was Orville's!

"It is going immediately, sir; Mrs. Shirley will be sure to have it by dinner-time."

"I am not sure of that, at all; unless you have a better memory to-day than you had yesterday. I should like to see it out of the house."

"It will be at the cottage as soon as you are, sir. John—below, there!—take this basket, here, to Mrs. Shirley's."

"That will do—then I shall find it when I get home," said his lordship, as he swung out of the shop.

Courtney, surprised, and suspecting something he could scarcely define to himself, hastily gave his order, and left the shop, at the same moment with the porter. He kept him and his basket in view, at a respectful distance, till he arrived at a neat small house in a lane opposite to some fields where such of the townsmen as have not the honour of being gownsmen are in the habit of recreating themselves with cricket. The little verandah was crowded with plants; handsome curtains shaded the Venetian window, in the centre of which hung a gilded cage, with a little tenant within,—typical, perhaps, of the prisoned state of its mistress.

Clement's heart throbbed quick as the porter approached the door: he rang—it was opened by a tidy-looking woman; Clement sprang forward. "Is Mrs. Shirley at home?" he asked, in a voice almost inarticulate, from agitation.

"Yes, sir!" replied the woman, looking as if surprised at the sight of a stranger, and perplexed between him and the porter, scarcely knowing which to attend to first.

Clement heard the sound of a piano-forte. "You need not come any further," said he, and the next minute he found himself at the door of the little drawing-room, his hand on the handle—he paused. "What if I should see some one I am utterly unacquainted with? What excuse—" but his suspense

was too tormenting—he opened the door, and beheld Julia ! She looked up, and with a shriek of delight flew into his arms. Instantly he felt his heart relieved of its worst fears. Never could she have met him thus had she had cause to blush in his presence. It was some minutes before either of them could find utterance, at length Clement released his sister from his embrace, and, looking sorrowfully at her, he said, “How is it, Julia, that I see you here—and alone ?”

“I am not alone, dear Clement,” said she, turning red and pale alternately. She looked round the room, and towards the door, and then added, almost in a whisper, “I am married to Lord Orville !” and she took his hand and kissed it with a beseeching air, that prayed him not to reproach her. But Clement’s pride, now that his anxiety was set at rest, awoke again.

“Am I then to call you Lady Orville ?” he asked, with more severity than he was aware of.

“To be sure you are ; that is, not before people !—” and again she lowered her voice, and looked towards the door, —“at least, not just yet.”

Clement looked her full in the face, with an expression that went to her heart.

“You are angry with me, Clement,” said she, bursting into tears.

“No, Julia, I am not angry with you,” he replied ; “but I am angry with those who have taken advantage of your youth and simplicity, and ignorance of the world, to initiate you into deception, and place you in a position that compels you, whilst bearing an honourable name, for which you have relinquished another not less honourable or less ancient, to go by one which I should imagine Lord Orville would, at a future period, blush to remember.”

“If you mean Madame de Villebois,” said the weeping Julia, who was still ignorant of that lady being pensioned for her services, “I am certain that all her advice, and everything she did, was from the most disinterested desire for my happiness ; to which, in fact, she sacrificed her own prospects ; and I must always feel myself her debtor. Lord Orville is so kind to me, dear Clement—so good ! He spends every moment with me that he can ; he has such an excellent

heart, Clement ; indeed, I have never yet seen the shadow of a fault in him."

"Was it no fault," asked Clement, sternly, "to degrade a young lady by a clandestine marriage?—to obtain his wishes by falsehood and fraud!—for I trust, Julia, that I only do you justice in believing, that when you left your aunt Crosby, you did so under your own full persuasion that you were actually coming to me at Paris."

"It was indeed, Clement!" sobbed Julia; "I should never have had the courage to have gone away under any other idea;—and as for the letter ——" She hesitated—she was unwilling to betray the part Shirley had acted in the affair, and of which she retained in her heart the most grateful sense; yet she was equally unwilling that her husband should bear the blame of what he had not actually committed; so she hid her face and wept afresh.

Courtney was melted at the sight of her grief. "Nay, Julia," said he, drawing her once more to his breast, "you must not distress yourself thus: what is done no explanation can undo. To continue the subject is only to pain us both; but one thing I must insist upon ——"

All was interrupted by the entrance of Lord Orville. The scene that followed may easily be imagined. Lord Orville bore the reproaches of Courtney with submission, because he felt that they were just; but when Clement said that, "as Julia's guardian, he should command her to return to Courtney Park, there to take up her abode with him until she should be of age."

"What!" exclaimed his lordship impetuously; "would you separate man and wife?—would you ——"

"I will never," interrupted Courtney, "either directly or indirectly, connive at my sister's entering secretly into a family that professes to think itself so far above my own that an open alliance with it is not to be thought of."

"My father will be more reasonable," said Lord Orville, "when I am of age. That very day I will solemnize my marriage afresh, and inform him of it!"

"Your lordship may inform the Earl of Maltravers of your own marriage when and how you please!" said Courtney, haughtily. "I shall inform him of my sister's marriage this very day, by letter. Not one day longer shall she

remain in a position so liable to misconception and misrepresentation."

"And if he should set it aside!" demanded his lordship.

"If he should, your lordship will be master of your own actions in a few weeks—it will then be for you to solemnize it again in the face of the world."

"And what is to become of our offspring?" asked his lordship, with all the importance of young paternity.

"Would you disgrace your sister's child?"

Courtney started, he had never thought of this result, in case of the marriage being protested against by the Earl of Maltravers. He looked at Julia; he saw too evidently that she was on the point of becoming a mother.

"How much you have to answer for!" he exclaimed, his anger bursting forth again, as he turned from her to Lord Orville.

"Courtney," interrupted Lord Orville, "you must forgive us everything. Your sister is happy with me; I adore her. If I could have placed a ducal coronet upon her brow the instant I made her my own I would have done it; in a very few weeks all our anxieties will be at an end. I do not doubt that my father will receive us both with affection; forgive us, then, and nothing will be wanting to our felicity. Our concealment must be strict for some little time longer, on account of our dear babe, to whose birth we are looking forward with a delight which I hope you will one day know by your own experience. Julia submits cheerfully to the seclusion and restraints her situation requires; and though we may lead gayer, or rather, more fashionable lives some time or other, we neither expect nor desire ever to be happier than we are here on this humble scale, to which it would be very imprudent in us to attract attention by departing from. Come Julia, my sweet wife, cheer up; look at your brother; he will not sadden us by persisting in his coldness now, when we might all be so happy together."

And Julia, encouraged by her husband's caresses, did look up, and so innocently, so beseechingly, that Clement could frown no longer: but he sighed, for he still felt mortified and anxious, and still reproached himself for not having kept his sister more immediately under his own eye. Nevertheless, he was greatly relieved by the discovery of her, and

by seeing that she was happy, and that Lord Orville's affection for her was fully commensurate with hers for him ; so he held out his hand to him and called him brother ; and Julia wept for joy, and her husband and brother smiled to see her smile again so sweetly.

Two points, however, Clement insisted upon as articles in the amnesty : the first was, full liberty to write to the Crosby family, under the seal of the strictest confidence, with an account of Julia's exact situation, and her earnest desire for her aunt and uncle's forgiveness for the step she had been persuaded into taking. This proposal met with no opposition ; indeed, Julia was glad that Clement should take upon himself any explanation that might relieve her aunt from uneasiness and exonerate herself from ingratitude ; and Lord Orville did not care if all the world knew of his marriage, provided that it did not reach the ears of the only person who had the right and the power to dispute it. But the next condition was much less easy to comply with ; indeed, it found the strongest opposition in the feelings of both Julia and her husband, though their judgment could not but acknowledge that it was based alike upon propriety and prudence. It was that Clement should be allowed to take lodgings for his sister in some retired place a few miles out of Cambridge. He could not bear the idea of her being exposed to impertinent curiosity and degrading conjecture. He trembled to think of her name being in any way involved with that of a strolling player ; of her giving birth to her child in a neighbourhood famed for even more than its share of the idle gossip and malevolent conjectures for which Cambridge is sufficiently noted ; and he conjured both her and her husband not to lose sight of what was due to their future position in the world in the present enjoyment of each other's society.

Lord Orville, thoughtless as he might be in all that concerned himself alone, was yet docile and reasonable as to anything that Clement—for whom he entertained a sincere respect—had to urge about Julia ; and she was too anxious to recover the good opinion of her brother and retain his forgiveness to offer any opposition to his wishes.

Courtney was not long in finding a suitable retreat for Julia during her confinement ; indeed, he had the place in

view at the time he spoke. Mrs. Hurst, the wife of farmer Hurst, of whom our good friend the curate has made such worthy mention, had made a very favourable impression on Clement, on his first coming to college, by the kindness with which she had nursed a young man who had entered at Trinity as sizer. Stimulated by the hope of providing for a widowed mother, who had deprived herself of everything but the barest necessities of life to eke out the means for his education, he had carried his studies to an excess that ended in the ruin of his health and his final disappointment in the honours for which he had sacrificed it, and threatened the ruin of his intellect also. Death spared him such completion of his sorrows. Courtney had often gone to see him in his illness, and always found Mrs. Hurst at her post, tending him, cooking for him, cheering him ; doing her duty, in short, like a good motherly woman, as she was.

"Ah ! poor young man," said she, "when she had performed to him the last sad office of following him to the grave ; "I knew, as soon as I looked at him that he would never get over it. I have seen too many of them broken hearts after the examinations. I have had the nursing of such before to-day."

And the good woman wept as she gave the details to Courtney, and he thought of her when he reflected on Julia's situation, and believed she was just the kind motherly person to whom he could entrust her.

It was on the morning that Courtney had taken Julia to see the apartments previous to his engaging them for her, that the accident which happened to the chaise had obliged them to alight at the blacksmith's cottage, where Miss Emily had been so horrified by hearing the inarticulate expressions of grief and self-reproach which poor Julia could not help uttering—all her fortitude giving way to the thoughts of being separated, though only by three or four miles, from the place in which her husband was compelled by every consideration of prudence to continue for some weeks longer.

The intimacy between Courtney and Orville was now renewed, with the additional tie of fraternal union, to strengthen the regard they had always had for each other. *Clement*, indeed, had a powerful motive for keeping his

brother-in-law as much as possible under his own friendly *surveillance*, in order to preserve him from the possibility of relapsing into his former wild and thoughtless habits ; but, to do his lordship justice, there was no occasion for anxiety on the subject ; for every day more and more devoted to Julia, and loving her better and better for everything she submitted to for his sake, he was unexceptionable in his domestic conduct, and rarely indeed did he betray the least temptation to relapse into the follies of his boyhood.

But which of my readers is there that has not read—if he or she have been happy enough to have lived in the days when fairy tales were not banished from the nursery as beneath the infantine intellect—of the cat who, transformed into a fine lady, and splendidly dressed in satins, laces, feathers, and diamonds, sat with edifying composure and majesty, to receive her guests until a mouse ran across the floor, when lo ! my lady, regardless of her flounced petticoat, her nodding plumes, her trembling diamonds, went down on her knees in an instant, scampering across the floor on all-fours, and poking her aquiline nose into every crevice and corner after the little quadruped that laughed her to scorn through a chink in the skirting-board. So Lord Orville, entrenched in all the decencies of private life, was one day suddenly startled from his propriety by the entrance of Shirley, in quest of a benefit.

“ I am determined,” said he, “ to have a bumper ;—not that I care for the money, because I am ready to throw it all, as soon as the curtain drops, in the face of the little rascal that dares to set himself up as my equal in *Macbeth* ; but I will scour the country round, to see if I cannot draw a better house than he did when he played *Hamlet*. ‘ I had rather be a ballad-singer, and cry mew, than listen to such groundlings.’ ”

“ Bravo, Shirley ! ” exclaimed his lordship ; “ I will go and help you. Do you remember what glorious fun we had when we canvassed for our audience at Whittlebury Market, and gave vouchers for the value of the tickets, to be taken out in beer and gingerbread ? ”

“ Yes ; but then your lordship was decked out in a car-roty periwig, and top-boots, and an old great-coat, and one of my ragged frilled or fringed shirts into the bargain ; you

would not pass muster now as one of the *corps dramatique*."

"And why not? 'tis manners make the man. But, moreover, we will change garbs—it is not the first time. I will take your great-coat, you mine. I your boots, you mine; I your hat, you mine. The play-bills and the tickets we will divide between us; the *carte du pays* also; you take one side, I another. You go towards Gormanton, I towards Creykedale. I will do my utmost, as conscientiously for you as if I was canvassing for a rotten borough—kiss all the women, bribe all the men. I only bargain for free admittance for Julia and myself."

Just then came a knock at the door, and in walked Courtney, and was immediately enlightened as to what was going on; for, in fact, Lord Orville was at that moment measuring his own length with that of Shirley's great-coat. Now, whether it be, as the ancient dramatist wisely observes, and as St. Paul aptly quotes after him, that "Evil communications corrupt good manners," or whether it be that even the wisest people have their fits of folly once in a lifetime, or whether it was that a recollection of Mr. Slender, and of his pretty daughters seen dimly through the geraniums came across Clement at that moment, we are not prepared exactly to say; but certain it is, that he felt, in himself, a strange desire, at this moment, to assume any disguise, and undertake any errand that should carry him, incognito, direct to Creykedale.

"Come, Orville," said he, "you married men have no business with such wild-goose chases; besides, that coat is 'a world too wide' upon you; it reminds me of the conundrum, for it is really like the two cities in France—*too* long, and *too* loose. It will fit me, ten times better; give me it, and I will go instead of you."

"*You!*" exclaimed Lord Orville, all amazement at such an unexpected freak in one whom he had accustomed himself to look up to as his Mentor; "by Jove, that would be capital! I should like to see you set out upon such an errand."

"Then you certainly will have that pleasure, if Shirley will lend me, instead of you, his habiliments, and here are my great-coat and boots at his service, in their place. What say you, Shirley?"

"Oh," said Shirley, "I am *agreeable*, any way ;—at least I shall have a very flattering representative, if not a successful one."

"Well, I bet both you and Orville a dozen of claret that I bring back more orders than you do. What say you, Orville, will you give up to me?"

"Willingly, I am delighted that you are up to the thing ; and I shall take a snug dine with Julia. Meanwhile, windows drawn up, you know, and all that sort of thing ; and dinner will be ready for us all, here, at six o'clock."

"Very well ; and then we shall compare notes, and Julia shall decide who has done the most."

So, in went Courtney into Orville's dressing-room, and returned in five minutes, transformed, by the aid of the worn-out great-coat, and pieced boots, and hat which had lost much of its beaver, into a somewhat suspicious-looking personage. Shirley loudly applauded him, on his entrance, and told him he looked his part admirably. Lord and Lady Orville laughed heartily, like boy and girl, as they still were ; and Courtney, as he surveyed himself in the glass, thought there was no fear of his being mistaken in his present garb for a gentleman. Courtney's horse was at the door ; so he took leave, mounted, and set off briskly, to get out of the way of any of his acquaintance as quick as possible.

"Stop, stop !" Lord Orville called out after him ; "you have got my snuff-box in your great-coat pocket."

"I shall not be robbed of it," cried Courtney, as he was turning the corner of the lane.

"And a note, I have to answer," vociferated Orville ; but the lessening sound of retreating hoofs was all the answer he obtained.

Little did Courtney think that the whim of that morning was to influence the happiness of the remainder of his life ! but it is scarcely right to term that a whim which, in him, was in reality an impulse of benevolence. The fact was, that Clement had wished to see Mr. Slender again, ever since the day he had so unfortunately bespattered him *en passant* on his way to Gormanton. The glance he had had of his pale and benevolent countenance had haunted his imagination, and the conversation about him, at Doctor Pluffy's, joined to that which he had involuntarily overheard

between that reverend gentleman and his curate, had made an indelible impression on his memory.

Yes ; he longed to see the poor man again, to become acquainted with him ; perhaps with his daughters. At any rate, the thought of them certainly added to the interest he took in their father, a worthy man with the education and feelings of a gentleman ; and the exemplary conduct that reflected credit upon his sacred calling, unable to maintain his family with decent comfort, struggling with anxieties and mortifications which he was obliged to hide, was a picture which Courtney could not contemplate without compassion.

"And I," he said to himself, "that am young and active, and ten times better able to encounter adversity than he can be—I, without either merit or exertion of my own, have enough and to spare for every comfort, every luxury ! nothing to do but to be thankful for it, and enjoy it, and do good with it. But the Almighty never intended that one should have everything, and another nothing. No ; He requires that one should give cheerfully from his abundance, and another receive gratefully in his necessity. So it is that wealth becomes the nurse of virtue, and, like mercy, 'twice blessed,'

" 'Blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.' "

What would it be for me to give this poor curate a whole year's salary beforehand ? Fifty—a hundred pounds ! what would it be to me ? I should not even miss it. I should not have the merit of making the smallest sacrifice for it ; but I should give it with pleasure and goodwill, and my own happiness would be increased by the thought that I had lightened his griefs, and gladdened the hearts of the innocent girls at his side." And then he contrasted them, in imagination, with the Misses Pluffy ; and Mr. Slender with Doctor Pluffy ; and then he thought again of Mr. Slender ; and then of the reverend and benevolent Sydney Smith, and of his saying, "A curate ! There is something which excites compassion in the very name of a curate ! How any man of purple palaces and preferment can set himself loose against the poor working men of God we are at a loss to imagine !"

"Yes," he continued to himself, "I should like to set this

poor curate forward, to make him comfortable at once. But, then, how to manage it is the thing. How can I introduce myself to him? Doctor Pluffy laid it, as a reproach, to his charge, that he could never resist a tale of poverty or distress. I must seem to want his assistance, or his advice, or something or other, and then I shall see what stuff he is really made of, and how I can best serve him."

These reflections brought Clement, as we have already seen, to Creykedale and the "Roebuck." The brief interview he had there with Mr. Slender confirmed him in his desire to befriend him for himself; but how was that desire increased when Margaret stood before him, with her father's note in her hand; her eyes cast down, as much in respect to his feelings, as to her own maiden modesty; her voice trembling with sympathy for his imagined poverty; the delicate tint on her cheek heightened to the bloom of the wild-rose by her agitation; the native grace of her carriage rendered more graceful still by a something of dignity which instinctively developed itself, as she spoke, the guardian of her timid sweetness. At that moment Clement felt for her a more profound respect than any titled heiress, decked out in diamonds for her presentation at court, could have inspired him with!

He galloped back to Cambridge in an excitement of spirits such as he had been long a stranger to, and related the adventures of the morning, as far as related to Mr. Slender—for of Margaret's name he was more chary, with such *graphic effect*, to use a favourite modern phrase, that his hearers were delighted. Julia was charmed to see him once more gay and happy as he used to be at Courtney Park; she asked him all sorts of questions about the daughters.

"I should love that sweet Margaret, I am sure," said she, "if I were to see her."

And Clement, pleased, he scarcely knew why, with her for saying so, kissed her cheek.

"And the parson," said Lord Orville,—“I fancy he is like Parson Adams: he will make a capital study for Shirley.”

"For lingo?" said Shirley, "I know a clergyman at Hull that served as a capital model for Mathews in that; the audience recognised him directly, and were ready to die of laughing."

"Well, we will all go and visit them together—Julia and all," said Orville; "we will take the parsonage by storm."

Clement was grave in a moment: "No, Orville," he said, "do not think of any such thing. It would be an impertinence to Mr. Slender, as well as to his daughters, for which I should never forgive myself. I am, indeed, ashamed as it is, for having made acquaintance with him under a false name, and on such a ridiculous pretext."

"The parson did not think it ridiculous," said his lordship, "it seems, or else he would not have come down with the dust so readily."

"Well, then, at any rate, I will give him no cause to repent of his benevolence," said Courtney. "And now," he continued more gaily, "with respect to the bet: have I lost my claret or not?"

"Lost, decidedly," said Lord Orville, "as far as Shirley is concerned; because you have not brought back the needful for him—not for a single ticket—boxes, pit, or gallery; but won, with respect to myself, because you have bamboozled the people twenty times better than I could have done, and given us a capital story into the bargain."

So the claret was broached, and the decanter passed round, till a summons came from Julia to coffee and music, and the evening closed in good humour and harmony, and Courtney retired to his chambers and his couch, there to hold—

"Communion sweet, communion large,"

and not exactly with himself, but with a form of high purity and love, that flitted before his fancy, nor left it when his corporeal eyes were closed in sleep.

For three or four days, Courtney was in the same good spirits; but he soon became restless, and he found out that he wanted some change,—in short, that he ought to go to Creykedale, to thank Mr. Slender once more, but not to repay him the money he had borrowed of him, for then he should leave himself no excuse to call again, not in his own name, either, for then he must acknowledge the deception he had practised in using another, which would, in itself, be sufficient to produce disgust in a mind so upright as Mr. Slender's, and prevent him from ever being received on the friendly footing which he was beginning exceedingly

to desire. "He would most likely never again suffer his doors to be opened to me," he argued with himself; "and if even he did, the girls would look upon me as somebody far too fine and too much above themselves to feel at ease with me. No; I should never see them in their natural colours; it is only by their still thinking me as poor and as friendless as themselves that I can hope to continue that charming unaffected intercourse which my tale of destitution has so happily prepared for me. It is so delightful to see people as they really are; to know that whatever esteem they may profess for one is indeed sincere, and for one's own sake. I have had enough of flattery already; but I should like to know how much I should have had by this time if I had inherited Mr. Slender's name and income, instead of my own."

It is unnecessary for us to dwell upon the subsequent visits of Clement to Creykedale, and their effect upon himself and those to whom they were made. The good curate has thrown sufficient light upon them in his Journal to show that their result was as agreeable as natural. Julia, with the intuitive perceptions of her sex, saw that her brother was under the influence of some feeling that rendered him happy; he did not long conceal it from her, and she, disinterested and unsophisticated, rejoiced that he had found an object worthy of his love, and saw nothing more natural than that he should desire to raise that object to the participation of all the advantages and enjoyments which his fortune secured to himself. She longed to embrace the gentle Margaret, and to assure her of the affection she should feel for her, as a sister; but Courtney could not allow her impatience to divert him from the fixed plan he had laid down to himself,—to conceal his real name and situation in life from the object of his love as long as possible, in order that their intercourse might continue on the unrestrained and confiding footing on which it had begun; and all that Julia could obtain from him was permission to go one Sunday to church at Creykedale, with her husband, in order that they might see at the same time Mr. Slender and his daughters.

The walk was, as we have seen, somewhat too much for Julia; and a few days afterwards she gave birth to her boy. It was to communicate this important event that Shirley

had come in such haste after Lord Orville, the morning that he was paying his first visit to the Rectory. His joy on this occasion would have been unbounded, had it not been damped by the slowness of Julia's recovery : after an ineffectual attempt of two or three weeks to nourish her infant at her own bosom, she was under the necessity of allowing him to be brought up by hand. The babe thrived nevertheless, but Julia continued so feeble that her medical attendant pronounced change of air absolutely indispensable for the recovery of her strength. It was therefore resolved that she should return once more to the motherly care of Mrs. Shirley ; there to remain till Lord Orville should be of age ; but as it was deemed imprudent for her to take her infant with her, for fear of exciting conjectures in the neighbourhood of Maltravers Hall, it became requisite to find out a secure and eligible nursing-place for him also. On this point the hearts of Julia and her brother decided in a moment. Yes ; he should be entrusted to Margaret Slender ; in her arms he would be as safe and as tenderly nursed as in his mother's. It would be most sweet and consolatory to Julia to know him under such watchful and gentle care ; and Clement would see him almost every day, and give his parents continual tidings of him. Such were the thoughts of the mother ; and what were the lover's ? He thought it would be very delightful to see Margaret nursing his little nephew unconsciously ; and then it would afford such an admirable opportunity of adding to the poor curate's stipend, without hurting his feelings by the appearance of a gift. But then to what amount must be the emolument ? Orville would have given *carte blanche*, but Clement insisted on the sum being so moderate as not to awaken the remotest idea of the rank of the parents. The case of transferring the infant to the parsonage was entrusted to the ever-ready Shirley, and he acquitted himself of his trust, under the disguise of a smock-frock and "clouted shoon," with his accustomed adroitness ; insomuch that Julia had the consolation of knowing, previous to her own departure from the farm, that the box which contained her precious treasure was safely delivered into Lucy Slender's own hands, with the special direction that it should be kept the right side up. In the course of a few weeks Julia found herself recovering

her health under the judicious nursing of Mrs. Shirley; and her desire to be restored to her husband and her infant naturally strengthening with her strength, she wrote to entreat that she might return to Sutton-Longfield, and have the happiness once more of seeing her babe under her own care. Lord Orville had already found his separation from her too long, and gladly acceded to her wishes for her return to Sutton-Longfield; but the very morning after her arrival, just as she was anticipating the pleasure of going herself to Creykedale for the babe, and pouring out her thanks to Margaret for her care of him, a special messenger arrived from Maltravers Hall. The earl was taken suddenly ill. Lord Orville must set off to see him immediately. Julia trembled like an aspen leaf: the crisis of her fate seemed at hand. She threw herself into her husband's arms, and wept. He could not bear to leave her in affliction; she should return with him. He would leave her again at Beech Cottage; they would take Creykedale and a look at their darling in their way.

The moment Lord Orville saw his father he felt convinced that he should not retain him many days; and his heart smote him at the idea of parting for ever with a parent who had always been so indulgent to him, without informing him of his marriage, and of the birth of his child. But the dread of agitating him, perhaps fatally, by the communication, possibly of drawing down his displeasure, his malediction, at such an awful moment, kept him silent. Nevertheless his conscience spoke in the tears which dropped upon his father's hand as he pressed it to his lips.

"My dear son," said the dying earl, "you see what we must all come to—even the noblest, and the most illustrious. I bequeath you a great name, free from blemish; always preserve it unsullied, undebased; always remember you are the representative of——" A fit of coughing interrupted him; for some minutes he lay much exhausted, and with his eyes closed.—"I could have wished," he said in a feeble voice, when he was sufficiently recovered to resume speaking,—"I could have wished, my son, had it so pleased God, to have lived to see you married."

Poor Henry's heart was on his lips. "My dear, dear father," he cried, "I am married! Forgive and bless

me!"—and, hiding his face in the embroidered coverlet, he wept.

"Married!" exclaimed the earl, jumping up as if he had been galvanized. "Forgive you! What am I to forgive! have you disgraced the blood that runs in your veins by marrying some low adventuring girl? Oh God! Oh God!" and back he fell upon his pillow, and closed his eyes, as if to shut out the dreadful idea. Henry thought he was dying.

"Oh, my lord! my father!" he cried; "do not afflict yourself with such a thought; I have married Miss Courtney."

The earl gave a long, deep-drawn sigh of somewhat doubtful meaning; it seemed, however, to relieve him, and he listened with tolerable fortitude to his son's account of his marriage, and of the charms and virtues of the youthful partner of his fate; but when he heard that he had a grandson, as well as a daughter-in-law, nature asserted her rights, and triumphed over pride and obstinacy.

"Bless you, my dear son," said he, laying his palsied hand on the head of Lord Orville, as he still knelt at the bedside, "and bless the boy, and bless his mother; I should like to see them both."

"You shall see Julia directly," said Lord Orville, starting up. "How happy your forgiveness will make her! And we will send for the boy immediately. He is like you, my dear, dear father!" and he kissed his father's cold, damp forehead, and flew to the bell for the valet and the nurse to resume their attendance whilst he hastened to Mr. Shirley's for Julia. In less than an hour he was again at his father's bedside with her, and they received his blessing together. Poor Julia was dissolved in tears as she looked at the earl, and thought of her own dear father; and the earl saw that she wept, and that her tears were genuine; and his heart opened to her innocence and beauty.

"You have begun life very young together, my dear children," said he, taking deeper and deeper respirations at every sentence. "May God grant you many years of happiness in each other, and bless your dear child, my grandson. Always impress upon his mind, I conjure you, that he will one day be the representative of his grandfather, the Earl of ——" he fell back exhausted. He spoke no more, and a

few minutes after Henry and Julia were weeping in each other's arms the Earl and Countess of Maltravers.

As soon as the funeral obsequies were performed, and the business matters attendant upon the young earl's succession were arranged, they hastened to reclaim their precious treasure ; and then it was that Julia clasped Margaret to her heart, with as much love as gratitude.

But what has become of that fair girl, and of Courtney all this long time that we have lost sight of them ? Ah ! fear not, dear reader ; the time has not seemed long to them, whatever this digression may have done to you ; so we will now return to them, and give them a fresh chapter to themselves.

CHAPTER XLIII.

COURTSHIP.

COURTSHIP !—What a delightful word ! What a world of innocent, of tender, of happy recollections is it not associated with ! It is such a graceful word too—so expressive. To court—to win : it breathes of all the manly deference in the lover, the modest maidenly grace in the lady, of the days of chivalry. It is for him to sue, for her to suffer herself to be won. And what sweet homage it is to pay ! what sweet approval to grant ! How exquisite the daily, hourly progress from admiration to preference, esteem, perfect confidence, and entire reciprocation ! Yes, certainly, courtship is a happy time, even when its happiness is damped by the frowns of fortune or dependence upon the arbitrary will of others ; but with Clement Courtney and Margaret Slender this blessed springtime of hope and joy was one of unmixed felicity. Difficult indeed would it have been to say which of them was the happiest, which the most devotedly attached. In Margaret's eyes Courtney was perfection personified. She could form no idea of human excellence going beyond his virtues, or human graces exceeding his attractions. From the first moment of her beholding him she seemed to herself to have commenced a new era in her existence : then for the first time she con-

ceived of society being formed into two classes—those who might resemble him, and those who she knew did not. Had she never seen him again she would yet have retained the distinction: but she did see him again and again, and every time she saw him, his image, which from their first brief interview had remained hidden in the interior of her heart, came more and more forward, until laying aside its shadowy indistinctness, it stood full before her mental vision in perfect life and beauty, never more to quit it. Her whole existence became one thought of him: not that her duties were neglected, or her affections contracted; but whatsoever were her occupations or her conversations, her hopes or fears, her sorrows or her consolations, her reveries by day or her dreams by night, still she was always conscious of his immediate presence in her soul. At first she imagined that the admiration with which she looked at him was only the natural tribute which every one must pay to his graces who had the power of contemplating them; the interest with which she listened to every word he uttered only the natural sympathy springing out of an innocent, and endearing friendship. But when the impetuosity of his feelings enlightened her as to the true nature of her own,—when she found that friendship love,—oh, then, her destiny to her was fixed! To join her fate to his; to win him from his dangerous though fascinating way of life; to share his poverty, if poor they were fated to be; to work with him, and for him; to soothe all his cares and sweeten all his toils; to make him as prudent as he was amiable, as respectable as he was talented, by every endearing encouragement, and well-timed exhortation, became her most ardent wish and determined object, to be realized at every risk save that of grieving her father; but she felt that that dear father saw with her eyes, and entered into her feelings; the recollection of his own youthful affections and of the mother of his Margaret, as she was at the same age, was more powerful with him than any calculations that worldly prudence might have suggested. Here, then, was felicity enough for Margaret. She was allowed to share the lot of the man she loved, whatever that lot might be. When, lo! all this romance of poverty and devotedness was most happily terminated by the discovery that he whom she thought poor

was in fact rich ; for, did he not say that he had enough ? Yes, he had a home to take her to, and that would be, she felt assured, a home for her father, and sister likewise. What more could she desire ! The fulness of contentment was hers, to be equalled in her heart only by her adoring gratitude to the Giver of all Good, who thus gave her the light of her eyes, and the desire of her heart.

And what, then, were Clement's feelings at seeing the lovely opening flower he had accidentally found in his path of life apparently so carelessly trodden but in fact so searchingly explored, thus put forth its brightest bloom and sweetest odours, under the vivifying atmosphere of his love ! All his care was to preserve their sweet intercourse in the same freedom from restraint, the same fulness of equality and confidence which had hitherto been so favourable to him in testing the disinterestedness of his Margaret, and the depth of her attachment. It was now that he rejoiced in the independence of the world which his fortune gave him. He had never calculated upon it as a means of further enrichment, by a union with some one as rich or even richer than himself ; had he happened to find his affections engaged to the daughter of a lady of long descent, of illustrious names, or to the daughter of a *millionnaire* of a descent of yesterday, he would have made the offer of his hand where his heart might prompt him with the same frankness that he did to his Margaret, obscure and portionless as she was ; but he considered himself in reality a thousand times more fortunate in being able to confer everything upon the woman he loved, rather than in receiving anything from her but her sole, pure and disinterested love in return. What, indeed, could additional wealth have given him, who personally wanted for nothing, in comparison with the exquisite gratification he found in delighting the object of his affection ! Alas ! how many warm and generous spirits have drank and administered only poisoned waters from sources which at first seemed to them as pure ! but with Clement, happily for him, love was synonymous with virtue ; his Margaret was at once the *beau ideal* of his imagination and the unbiassed choice of his judgment. One moment he fondly melted over her as the darling of his tenderness, the next he gazed upon her with even devotional tenderness, as his

betrothed helpmate, the heaven-appointed partner of his future destiny !

How delightful were their morning walks, their evening readings ! How quickly were his favourite poets transferred, one volume after another, from his splendid bookcase at his apartments in Trinity to the humble walnut-shelves at the parsonage ! Never were the seeds of poetry scattered on a more congenial soil than the mind of Margaret afforded them. Her every look, her every tone, her every movement, was an illustration of Akenside's glorious sentiment—

“ There doth beauty dwell—
There most conspicuous, e'en in outward shape—
Where dawns the high expression of a mind
By steps conducting our enraptured search
To that eternal origin whose power,
Through all th' unbounded symmetry of things,
Like rays effulging from the parent sun,
This endless mixture of her charms diffused.
Mind, mind alone, bear witness earth and heaven,
The living fountain of itself contains,
Of beauteous and sublime. Here, hand in hand,
Sit paramount the graces ; here enthroned
Celestial Venus, with divinest airs,
Invites the soul to never-fading joys ! ”

Talk of southern skies and classic images, forsooth ! the precious gift of a poetical imagination was never meant to be dependent upon the accidents of mere outward circumstances and material things. No, no ! as many lofty visions have been nursed among the Scottish mountains, nay, in the fens of Lincolnshire, as on the voluptuous shores of Greece or Italy. They may not have found utterance in measured numbers, or been borne upon the wings of fame to public admiration and critical notice ; but what of that ! they have had as refining and as elevating an influence on the souls of those who cherished them ; and certain we are that, at the time we are speaking of, the curate's little parlour breathed an atmosphere of poetry and love, ay, and of joy and hope, that Tempe or Arcadia might have been proud to own.

And then, how pleasant were the transitions of the discourses held therein, from the imaginative to the positive, the *dulce* to the *utile*, from poetry and romance to plain prose and matter of fact ! Often these transitions were made, on the part of Courtney, with an abruptness and

seeming want of connection that made the light-hearted Lucy laugh outright. One morning he was reading to Margaret the tale of "Palemon and Arcite," in tones well worthy of Dryden's harmonious versification. When he arrived at the description of Emily's going to the chase, "By the by," he exclaimed, throwing the book upon the table, "you must have a horse of your own, my Margaret! What colour do you like? I have a pretty bright-bay, full of fire, yet a docile creature; should you like that?"

"I dare say I should like the colour; but the fire I could excuse; you must not expect me, dear Clement, to ride like lady Emily. I have never been on horseback since I was ten years old; my poor father was forced to sell his pony during my dear mother's illness."

"But I have one that will suit him exactly," said Courtney, taking her hand and drawing nearer to her, as he ever did when her voice betrayed an inflexion of sadness; "a nice, sure-footed, even-paced galloway, that will eat out of his hand, and amble along so gently that he can write a sermon whilst he is upon its back."

"Oh how pleased papa would be!" exclaimed Lucy, longing to run and tell him of it directly; "he has often said how thankful he should be if he could but have a pony again; and he was so tired the last time he had to go to Sutton-Longfield."

"And why did you not tell me so before, you naughty girl?" said Courtney; "but I suppose if I had offered him my galloway he would only have scolded me for my improvidence in being willing to part with it. However, when I am downright his son-in-law he will not, I trust, be so undutiful as to demur to accept anything I may wish to present him with. Nor you neither, Miss Lucy; you will find me a very arbitrary brother, I can tell you. I shall make you do what I like, and learn what I like too."

"I am afraid you will find both of us require but too much teaching, dear Clement," said Margaret; "I shall make a very poor figure among fine ladies, if ever we should happen to have acquaintance with any."

"Ah! but recollect," he replied, mocking her gravity; "they do not know Greek and Latin. Which of them, I

wonder, could have offered to help their husbands out by keeping a school?"

"Nay, now Clement, that is not fair," cried Margaret; and she raised her hand, as if to punish him for his impertinence; but, somehow, it was seized, and made accessory to her being drawn nearer and nearer to him, till he revenged himself on her cheeks and forehead and waving tresses, for her intention, regardless of her exclamations that it was not fair at all."

"Well, then," said he, "promise that you will forgive me both my peccadillos at once, and then I will release this treasonable hand, lifted up against its master." And then he kissed it, and let it go.

"And now," said he, trying to win back her averted eyes, "will you have the kindness to proceed with your observations?"

"I was going to say, if you had not interrupted me so unpolitely," said Margaret, with a smile playful as one of Lucy's, "that you have spoilt me by pretending not to see any of my deficiencies; "I believe, however, gentlemen do make allowances, but ladies, depend upon it, will find out how ignorant and untaught I am, and will despise me for it accordingly."

"I should like to see them do it," said Courtney, flushing in an instant at the thought.

"Ah! but most likely they will not let you see them do it; but I shall not care for that, if they do not blame you for choosing one so ignorant."

"And I have yet to learn of what it is that you are ignorant; I have never found it out."

"Oh, of the commonest things connected with society. I have never even learnt to dance."

"No one would believe it who saw you come into a room; but we can get Mr. Cutcaper, or some other renowned professor of the art, to teach you a quadrille in a week, and beyond that my ambition for you, on that head, does not soar."

"And then, I do not know a note of music."

"So much the better," some men of my acquaintance would say; indeed, I have a friend who professes to have been looking for the last ten years for a lady who does not

play and declares that if he could have found her he would have married her directly, provided she would have had him. He says he descended as low in the social scale as to cast a sheep's eye at his butcher's daughter ; but one day when he was going past, he heard her thumping away on the piano, so he turned away in despair, convinced that it was decreed by fate he should die a bachelor."

"What a pity," said Lucy, "that he should happen to be going past just when she was playing."

"It was, indeed!" said Clement, with a side-smile at Margaret, who could scarcely help laughing herself at Lucy's grave simplicity of remark.

"I am not altogether of his way of thinking ; on the contrary, I am very fond of music ; but it is a thing one can always get plenty of in society, and by those who are partial to books—scholars, like us,"—the little hand was half-lifted up again, but the penalty it had incurred just before checked it,—"by scholars like us," Clement repeated, longing for a recommencement of hostilities, "it is scarcely missed ; but you have the most captivating of all music in yourself, dear Margaret, a voice—

" 'Sweet as the shepherd's pipe upon the mountains ;'

and then, you have that natural taste for drawing which no tuition could give—you know you have. Look at this pretty sketch of the cedar : so, you see, after all the pains you have taken to vilify yourself, all the ingenuity you have had recourse to in magnifying your deficiencies, there is not one you have pleaded that can be admitted."

"Ah ! if you were my sole judge I should always come off well ; but then, again, I suppose almost all ladies speak French and Italian ; I do not know a word of either."

"Granted ; but remember the Latin—there we shall ride over them triumphant ; there we shall come the old Romans over them, and despise their degenerate modern Italian, as I shall tell them."

"No, pray do not ; promise me you never will. I should be laughed at, I know I should."

"Do not alarm yourself, my sweet Margaret," said Clement, laughing himself at her fright. "No doubt there are a great many foolish women, as well as men, who make a senseless

parade of their little smattering of French or Italian, when their own language would serve them ten times better; but if we can manage to spend a little time upon the Continent—and, by economy,” and here he looked most hypocritically considering and calculating—“I think we may, you will soon acquire the language of the place we may happen to be in, quite sufficient for all you will want. We have time enough before us, and a year or two well employed will make my Margaret everything she can desire for herself; for me she is everything I desire already.”

So fled the happy hours, linked with anticipations happier still.

CHAPTER XLIV.

CONSTERNATION AT THE “ROEBUCK.”

MR. AND MRS. GREENSIDES were just sitting down one evening to their tea, with the comfortable accompaniment of a couple of substantial rounds of well-buttered toast, when Miss Nancy, whose complexion had already been considerably heightened by preparing the same, hearing the sound of wheels, ran to the door to ascertain to what description of vehicle they might belong. She instantly came back with her cheeks more of a flame-colour than they were before, exclaiming, “My gracious, mother! if there isn’t a chaise coming up with a lady and gentleman in it!”

Up jumped Mrs. Greensides, and smoothed her apron, and pulled her cap a little more over her still handsome face. (It was not the fashion then to wear either caps or bonnets slipping off the back of the head.) Mr. Greensides rose more slowly from his seat, having stooped down to put the toast within the fender to keep it hot. Miss Nancy ran hastily, first to the glass, to give her ringlets a twirl, and then to call John the ostler, but he, like a good man and true, was already at his post, and would have opened the chaise door, but “the gemman” inside, impatient of delay, had incontinently opened it for himself, and jumping out before the steps could be let down, scarcely waited for that ceremony to be performed by John ere he handed out a young lady, en-

veloped in a deep veil. By this time the whole force of the "Roebuck" was assembled at the door: landlord, landlady, Miss Nancy, John the ostler, and even Betty, who ought, in truth, to have been looking after her work, and not after the "arrivals;"—but gossiping is so catching! especially among women.

The gentleman, however, nothing daunted by the formidable array of petticoats drawn up in front of him, led the lady in, between the ranks that fell back as he came forward; and, addressing mine host of the "Roebuck" in a very winning way, inquired if he could have "good accommodation," according to the kindly promise of the signboard.

"My mistress will settle all that to your mind, sir, no doubt," replied the quiet man; and, facing about to the chimney corner, he quietly settled himself again in his arm-chair, whence he commanded a view of the toast, which he drew a little further from the fire—not that he had any notion of its imbibing the *empyreuma* so dreaded by the bilious and the gastric,—but he had an instinctive perception that it would "eat better" if it was not too much fried.

The driver, meanwhile, had tipped a knowing wink to the ostler, who communicated the same by a telegraphic sign—perhaps we ought to say by *telegram*—to the maid-of-all-work, not unperceived by Mrs. Greensides, who, in consequence of it, drew herself up, so as to look a little less broad in proportion to her height than she had done the minute before. Nevertheless, she answered with tolerable or tolerating civility,—

"Why, sir, we have, I may say, pretty good accommodation for gentlemen, but as for ladies, we seldom ——"

"Oh, do not make yourself uneasy about me," said the lady. "Seclusion and a cottage are all I desire. I can repose as well under a thatched roof ——"

"Oh dear, ma'am," interrupted Mrs. Greensides, with something of the importance of a *propriétaire*, "as for that, our roof has not been thatched for many a long year. Mr. Greensides had it all tiled before ever he brought me to it; and it was only this summer we were a-talking of having it slated; but some people reckons slates make it so hot."

"Then, at any rate, your customers would be sure of a warm reception," said the gentleman, "as I dare say they always are, or that fine open countenance of yours is sadly thrown away upon you." And then, by some strange concatenation of ideas, he began to sing, in no undertone of voice,—

"Oh, rare Major O'Flann,
He had a face as big as a big warming-pan."

"Dear Francis!" whispered the young lady, in a tone of tender remonstrance that made him recollect himself.

"True, true, my angel," said he; "that is not to the point. To stay, or not to stay—that is the question."

"Oh, stay!" exclaimed the lady.

"'Fly not yet; 'tis just the hour,'"

sang the gentleman, catching the cue.

"It is so quiet—so rural!" continued the lady. "I am sure by daylight it is a love of a place! I dare say we shall hear the nightingale."

"'It is the nightingale, and not the lark,'"

said the gentleman, giving the lady a rapturous embrace. Mrs. Greensides began to think him a little out of his wits.

"Nay, sir," said she, "as to that, you'll hear nothing here but our old cock—that does, to be sure, crow betimes in the morning; and our cuckoo-clock—and that does, indeed, go so natural-like, that when we first came it always waked my husband, every time it struck, with a start, like; but we have got used to it long ago, and nothing wakes him now."

The young man sang forth again,—

"'Cuckoo! cuckoo! Oh, word of fear!
Unpleasing to the married ear.'

"Is it not so, my good man?"—clapping the quiet man on the shoulder.

"It is rather startling, sir," he replied, "when one first hears it; but it is like everything else—nothing when you are used to it."

The young man turned away, laughing, and beginning afresh,—

"'When daisies pied, and violets blue,
And ladies' smocks all silver white.'"

He capered round the lady with such an exuberance of gaiety that she was obliged to bring her head very near his

again, to whisper her remonstrances afresh. He then, to oblige her, as he said, put on a more serious air, and begged her to lay aside her "envious veil," relieving her from it with a grace that Miss Nancy thought finer than anything she had ever seen in her life.

"Why, the dear me, miss!" exclaimed Mrs. Greensides, "surely its Miss Emily Pluffy!"

"No, madam," said the young man, in a tone of mock solemnity, "the peerless form that you now see before you was Miss Emily Eleonora Pluffy; she is now, mark, what 'one day, one little day' may bring forth, Mrs. Francis Shirley, to my infinite contentment."

"La! how funny!" said Miss Nancy.

"Dear Francis!" was softly murmured by the *ci-devant* Miss Emily Eleonora Pluffy; but her voice was lost in the louder tones of Mrs. Greensides' wonder.

"The deary me! how very unaccountable! Surely, sir, you cannot be that there other Mr. Shirley that came here to get up a benefit, and that has been for ever at Mr. Slender's ever since."

"Certainly not, madam; certainly, I am not that there other, but this here Mr. Shirley; nor am I the other, or some other, or any other; no other, indeed, than the real individual, Francis Shirley, that stands before you, at your service, and has the honour of presenting to you this lady as his lawfully-wedded and well-beloved consort and wife, Mrs. Francis Shirley."

"Oh, sir, I knowed Miss Emily before to-day,"—and here Mrs. Greensides made one of her most civil curtsies,—“and she me, I'm sure. We have paid tithes and Easter dues many a year to her papa, she knows. I hope Dr. Pluffy and your mamma is well, miss."

"I hope they are," the bride replied, with an interesting sigh.

"Ah, well, the deary me! What a day may do, as that gentleman says. But, however, what is done cannot be undone—that is certain; and the more the pity, sometimes, as my poor grandmother used to say, every year her wedding-day came round.—You Betty, what are you gaping after? Carry them two candles into the best parlour.—I ought to ask your pardon, miss, for keeping you standing here, but I am so flustered, somehow.—Mr. Greensides, my dear, don't

you see the kettle is boiling over—all on them bright irons, too."

"And over the toast, I declare!" ejaculated Mr. Greensides.

"Pray, miss, walk this way; but you had better not let the chaise go away; for I am sure our 'Roebuck' will be very much beneath you, after your papa's fine house. You will find a deal properer accommodation at Cambridge for such as you."

"The essence of disinterested modesty!" said the bridegroom. At that instant the chaise rattled off. "But the fates are against you, good Mrs. Greensides, and this young lady," chucking Miss Nancy under the chin, "by her roguish smiles, seems to say that you are doing yourself injustice in underrating the capabilities of the 'Roebuck'; so, be so good as to let us have dinner, and we will straight sit down to it, with what appetite we may."

"Dinner, sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Greensides; "why, dear me! it is almost bedtime."

"So much the better; call it supper then," said Mr. Shirley, with the same indomitable good humour.

"I am really afraid we have not got anything in the house that Miss Emily can eat, sir," continued the landlady, who was beginning to calculate consequences; "I know the doctor is so very particular."

"Oh, but I am not 'pa!" said Mrs. Shirley; "anything will do for me: a chicken, or a cutlet, or a little white fricassee, with some fruit, and cream, and brown bread, and nice butter, fresh from the churn. I am so fond of cottage fare!"

"Good of the kind, quick as thought, and plenty of it; that is what we want, and all we want," said the young man, gathering up the folds of "woven air," to use Lady Morgan's expression, that had fallen round his admiring bride, and leading her into the "best parlour," the door of which was no sooner closed upon the loving couple than Mrs. Greensides began to give vent to her astonishment and dismay.

"The deary me, Mr. Greensides! who would have thought that I should ever, the longest day I have to live, have seen such a day as this at the 'Roebuck!'"

"The longer one lives, the more one always does see,"

said Mr. Greensides, taking up the toast, and carefully puffing away the ashes that had, like envious wrinkles, obscured its before smiling surface.

"Nay, my dear," said his troubled helpmate, "you may set that toast down again, and put the teapot on the hob. I have no time to think of tea now; and if I had, I could not touch a mouthful of anything. The deary me! what a world we live in! They may well say it turns upside down every day. You Betty, make up the fire, and get the spit ready; but first run to John Ostler, and tell him to try and see if he can catch a duck asleep: if anything eats tender, new killed, it's a duck, if it be put down whilst its warm; and you, Nancy, put on your apron, and pull it. The deary me! dinner at this time of night—six o'clock! A cutlet, indeed! where am I to get a cutlet, I wonder? and then a fricassee! What am I to fricassee! If I had had a rabbit I might, perhaps, have tossed that up with some white sauce and a spoonful of mushroom-ketchup; but, however, I can make Miss Emily a pancake. It is a good thing we have got that cold round of beef in the house, with pickled onions and red cabbage—it will look very well. The deary me! what will the doctor say? He will take our house away from us; mark me, if he does not."

"Nay, my dear," said Mr. Greensides, roused into positivity by the appalling form his wife's fears began to take, "as to that we have law on our sides. We are bound, by Act of Parliament, to furnish food and provender to the wayfaring man and his horse—and lodging too, for that matter."

"No, Mr. Greensides, that, by my consent, we will not do. Serve them with a bit of dinner or supper, whichever they may please to call it, and welcome—for it shall never be said, please God, whilst I am mistress here, that anybody went away, to my knowledge, faint and fasting from the 'Roebuck,' as long as there is bite or sup in the house; but lodging I will not give to these young folks. You may depend upon it he has 'loped with Miss Emmy'; and how can I know, after all, that they are actual man and wife? And what would the doctor say, if I harboured them here promiscuously, and then found out that they wasn't? And where would our license be if our house once lost its

character? all the Acts of Parliament in England could not bring it back again. The deary me! what a world we live in, I do say. There's one Mr. Shirley for evermore at Mr. Slender's, courting, they reckon, Miss Margaret, that used to be so steady, and such a pattern; and here's another Mr. Shirley comes with Miss Emily Pluffy, all huddled up in white, like a ghost, and calls her his wife; as if parsons' daughters could find nobody for husbands now-a-days but player-men."

"Well," said Miss Nancy, mixing the mustard, while her mother was rubbing the spoons, "I'm sure if they are all like them Mr. Shirleys, they are quite good enough, and too good for Miss Pluffys, for they are nasty proud things—at least, I know Miss Pluffy is, she tosses her head, whenever she meets a middling body, like us, as if they was not as good flesh and blood as herself; and you see how nice and free this Mr. Shirley is, and so was the other—they are——"

"Hold your tongue, Nancy, and do not talk like a fool," interrupted her mother; "we shall have you falling in love next, when fair-time comes round, with some rope-dancer or other like that foolish fellow in green satin breeches, and a red turband, that eat fire last year, and did a heap of awful out-o'-the-way things that I call downright wicked. I like good honest people, that get their bread in a Christian way, and spend what they have to spare in a good neighbourly fashion, here at the Roebuck, or comfortable places where they have a little friendly talk. So, take the lanthorn, and go into wood-house and see if you can find half a dozen eggs; and mind and don't frighten that there speckled hen that's a sitting, off her nest.—You see, my dear," addressing her husband; "I could send in a dish of eggs and bacon, to make out with, but perhaps they might fancy it low; what do you think?"

"I think, my dear, that whatever you send in, you will see very little of it come out again."

"Why, no, to be sure; as for that, such as him has always good appetites. I am not so uneasy about my dinner as I am about the doctor."

Lo! as she spoke, another carriage drove up to the door, and out of it descended the Reverend Doctor Pluffy himself,

with a most ominous cast of countenance. Mrs. Greensides turned very pale ; Miss Nancy very red. Mr. Greensides left the toast to take care of itself, and came forward with, what he meant to be a bow, but it did not get beyond a sort of steady nod. The doctor returned it, by slightly touching his shovel-hat. The women curtsied their very best.

"I wish to know who you have got in your house just now, Mr. Greensides?" said the doctor, in a husky, and somewhat inarticulate voice.

"We have not a many people, just now, your reverence ; it is our slack time."

"But who have you, I ask ? I suppose you have not an empty house."

"We never ask the names of our comers, sir ; it is no part of our business."

"But it is part of mine, to know, sir," said the doctor, raising his voice to the magisterial pitch ; "and it is what I insist upon knowing."

"Your reverence is free to ask them. There is a lady and gentleman in the parlour to the right there ; a person that travels with religious tracts in the back bedroom ; and a lame man, that walks about the country with brooms, asleep in the stable."

And now Mr. Greensides, conceiving that he had fully acquitted himself of all that could be expected from him, walked back again to the fireplace, and fixed his eyes upon the toast.

"I wish to see that lady and gentleman," said the doctor.

Poor Mrs. Greensides looked in consternation at her daughter, and, for the first time in her life, was speechless.

"Lack-a-daisy, mother !" said Miss Nancy, whose indignation against the doctor, for coming to disturb the happiness of the new-married pair, was fast getting the ascendancy over her respect for his shovel-hat, "you need not look so frightened ; how can you help it, it is no fault of yours ? I don't mind a bit going in, if you like, and telling Miss Emily, that her papa——"

"What then !" the rector exclaimed, "the foolish girl is actually here, and that scoundrel with her. If you harbour such vagabonds, Mr. Greensides, you must look sharp after your license, next sessions, I can tell you."

"I said how it would be," said Mrs. Greensides in a crying tone; "I knew it would come to that."

"Do not be afraid, my good woman," said Mr. Shirley, bolting out from the parlour, where the trembling Emily was trying to hide herself behind the scanty window-curtain,—

"‘That I have taken this old man’s daughter.’"

"Old man!" roared out the doctor, "you paltry itinerant, I will commit you, if it is only for that."

"‘Is most true,’" the bridegroom continued; "‘true I have married her.’"

"You have, you villain, to my eternal disgrace; but it was under a false character, and I will get you indicted."

"‘Speak of me as I am;’" said his son-in-law calmly; "‘nothing extenuate, nor ought set down—’"

"No, sir; I will neither speak of you, nor to you, till I get you into a court of justice; but I insist upon seeing that deluded girl whom you have basely inveigled from one of the best, the most respectable of homes; I will learn, from her own lips, whether it is really her own free will and wish to follow your beggarly fortunes."

"I will first ask her, sir, with your leave, if it be her own free will and wish to see you; for without that should be the case, I am sure Doctor Pluffy is too much of a gentleman to intrude upon any lady’s privacy, even though that lady should happen to be his daughter."

So saying he retreated back into the parlour, gaily humming,—

"‘Lips that sweetly were foresworn,
Eyes that do mislead the morn.’"

The doctor was perfectly amazed at his coolness.

"That fellow’s impudence," said he, "exceeds anything I ever met with in the whole course of my existence! But he will find himself mistaken, if he thinks to escape me so easily." And here the doctor made a horrible grimace. "I shall be getting the gout in my stomach, with all this, if I do not take care. Mrs. Greensides, give me a glass of hot brandy-and-water, and show me some decent place where I may sit down to drink it."

"To be sure, sir; directly, sir; dear me! what can I be thinking of? Will your reverence walk into the other parlour,

sir? I wish it had been the best; but one never knows what is a-going to happen in this world. Nancy, the fine sugar and a tumbler—the kettle does boil."

The doctor looked and felt very apoplectic; he wiped his forehead as he sat down in the *other parlour*, and, putting his handkerchief over his head, said he would ring for his daughter when he was a little more composed; whether he meant morally or physically, we are not able to say.

Meanwhile, there was much silent bustle on the other side of the door. Mrs. Greensides crept about, and gave her orders in a whisper; the quiet man was quieter than ever, and Miss Nancy slipped off her shoes, whilst she conveyed a tray into the best parlour with all the cold edibles that the pantry afforded, and a decanter of sherry, for which Shirley—who, like Tom Jones, however much in love, could always discuss a shoulder of mutton—slipped a sovereign into Miss Nancy's hand, telling her, with a significant look, to be sure and take care that the front door was kept close shut, or else the lady would take cold.

In half an hour the doctor had disposed of his brandy-and-water, and in some degree recovered his composure. He had now made up his mind to assume the dignified, the injured, the resigned, with a slight touch of the sentimental. He rang the bell. Miss Nancy answered it with a very heightened colour.

"Tell the young lady in the other parlour that I wish to see her."

Miss Nancy went away, and returned the next minute with a colour higher still. "If you please, sir, the lady and gentleman are gone."

"Gone! where to? which way? Order my chaise round instantly."

"If you please, sir, your chaise is gone, too."

Here was a climax! yet so it was; the bride and bridegroom, after refreshing themselves with a hasty luncheon, for certainly it had none of the formalities of a dinner, had stepped out of the parlour window into the doctor's chaise, Shirley informing the driver that the doctor was suddenly taken dangerously ill, and that he was obliged to go, with all speed, for a physician for him. "You must drive as fast as you can, my lad," said he, "to Doctor Tiptoe's, at New-

market, first door to the right after you pass the 'Rose and Crown.' You'll see the red light over the door. Here is a crown-piece for you to begin with, and I will give you another if you get there in an hour."

And, accordingly, in an hour Shirley found himself in the presence of Doctor Tiptoe ; having previously deposited Mrs. Shirley and her handbox at the "Rose and Crown," to be in readiness for the "chaise forward," which he ordered at the door. After briefly stating that Doctor Pluffy had been suddenly seized with an apoplectic attack, at the "Roebuck," at Creykedale, where he had gone on an errand of charity, Shirley begged that Doctor Tiptoe would set off to see him without loss of time.

"Never do lose a moment, sir, in cases of apoplexy, paralysis, gout, cramp, or insanity," said the doctor, looking round the room for his hat. "Much obliged to you, sir, for your recommendation."

"Allow me, sir, to recommend your taking your lancets with you."

"Never am without them, sir ; they are always at my bedside."

"And your cupping instruments, may I suggest?"

"Certainly, sir ; in cases of emergency I can cup, and do ; though I look upon cupping, in general, as a distinct branch of practice. John, look out the cupping-glasses."

"And a blister," Shirley longed to add ; but afraid of carrying the joke too far, he refrained, and whilst John was packing up the cupping-glasses, and the doctor buttoning up his great-coat, he wished him good-night, and a safe drive.

"Then am I not to have the pleasure of your company, sir?" inquired the doctor.

"Sir, I should have been most happy, did not business, of an indispensable nature, require my presence in an entirely opposite direction—business, indeed, so important, that nothing but my anxiety for Doctor Pluffy could have induced me to delay it, even for an hour ; but now, that I know he will soon be under your kind and able direction, I shall make myself easy about him."

"Sir, you flatter me highly ; depend upon it I will do my best for my patient."

"Above all things, advise him to keep himself composed

and cool," said Shirley, tapping his forehead two or three times, in a very meaning manner, with his forefinger.

"I understand, sir," said the doctor, with an answering gesture, "the head, the head ! and Doctor Pluffy is rather a full subject ; lives generously, I believe, sir."

And so the gentlemen parted with mutual expressions of civility ; the son of Esculapius got into the chaise which was waiting for him at the door, Shirley found another, for himself and his fair companion at the "Rose and Crown," and they finished their day's adventure by sitting down to supper at the "Angel," at Bury St. Edmund's, with excellent appetites, and without fear of interruption.

Doctor Pluffy's rage at finding himself thus tricked, by his new son-in-law escaping with his bride in his own chaise, may be imagined ; however, there was no help for it, but sending the ostler off at full speed to Cambridge for another chaise, which came up to the door at the very moment that his own came back again, the horses all in a foam, with Doctor Tiptoe in it, fumbling in his pockets to make sure that he had got his lancets. This point ascertained, he hustled into the *best parlour*, of which the doctor had now taken possession, and found that persecuted divine in the act of recruiting his spirits, previous to setting off, with a second glass of brandy-and-water, for he made it a point of conscience never to take wine at second-rate houses.

"Good evening, Doctor Pluffy ! how do you find yourself this evening ?" asked Doctor Tiptoe.

"Why, not very well, doctor, thank you ; a little out of sorts. How are you ?"

"Quite well, thank God ! wish you were the same. I was sorry to hear that you had had something a little unpleasant."

"More than unpleasant, doctor ; I shall never get over it."

"Oh yes, you will, my good sir ! never fear ; these are things we must expect at our time of life."

"Ah, doctor, this was most unexpected to me, I can assure you."

"Then you had no warning, no suspicion beforehand—everything as usual ?"

"Not the slightest idea, sir, of anything of the kind !"

Here the doctor's conscience gave him a twitch, which he gulped down in his brandy-and-water, and went on, "You may depend upon it, if I had had I would have taken good care to prevent it."

"Very right ! premonitory symptoms should never be unattended to ; prevention is the best cure, and a good deal may be done by abstinence, and avoiding all excitement or stimuli ; but still, sir, nature will have its course ; and then all we can do is to palliate, and guard against a return."

"Yes, that I shall take pretty good care they shall not do—that beggarly scoundrel shall never come within my doors."

"What beggarly scoundrel do you mean ? Whom are you talking of ?"

"Why, of my daughter to be sure, and the rascal she has run away with ! I made myself certain you knew all about it, by your beginning to talk of it as soon as you came in."

"Why, surely, sir, you cannot mean that very gentlemanly and agreeable young man that came for me in such haste, and begged me so earnestly to lose no time in setting off to you, and to be sure and bring my lancets ?—and here they are !"

"And what do you want them for, sir ; is any one ill in the house ?"

"I thought I might want them for you, Doctor Pluffy ; I understood from the gentleman, a Mr. Shirley, that you had had a sort of fit."

Doctor Pluffy was very near having a fit in good earnest at these words ; and Doctor Tiptoe, beginning to suspect a hoax, heartily wished he would have one of some sort or other, in order that he himself might make sure of his fee. He did, however, manage dexterously enough to feel the rector's pulse in the course of the explanation that followed, and to exhort the liberal use of diluents and cooling powders, with low diet for a few days ; for which unpalatable and unwished-for piece of advice the unwilling patient found himself called upon to pay not only the accustomed fee, but also the hire of the chaise just come from Cambridge, in which the doctor of bodies returned to Newmarket, whilst the doctor of souls, re-entering his own moodily, set off again for Gormanton.

It was not until the sound of the chaises gradually died away in the distance, that Mrs. Greensides had the courage to breathe at ease, and look round the bar, with the consolatory thought that she was as yet mistress of all she surveyed. Miss Nancy gave way to a loud peal of laughter, which she had with the utmost difficulty restrained so long, at all that had passed ; whilst Betty, and John the ostler, stood open-mouthed to listen to her comments ; the religious-tract merchant crept half-way down stairs, to listen to the gossip, and the man with the brooms popped his head out of the stable with the same laudable intention of making out what the bustle had been about. Mr. Greensides meanwhile, with unaltered mien, handed his wife the kettle, took up the long-neglected toast, and observed, that as they had waited for it such a time, they could probably do very well with an additional round.

CHAPTER XLV.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

It is the misfortune of very cunning people always to imagine that there can be nobody else in the world as cunning as themselves. Hence, like over-eager chess-players, they go on, absorbed in their own game, in schemes against their adversary, who sees through them all the time, meets one plot with another, and comes off conqueror at the moment least expected.

Mrs. Pluffy thought herself exceedingly clever in discovering, as she fancied, the actual name and condition of Emily's incognito admirer, and still more so in favouring his secret visits, by pretending utter ignorance of them herself, and taking good care that they should not be interfered with by any other person ; but she was little aware that all her manœuvres were seen through by Emily, much more clearly than Emily's were seen through by her mamma. Nevertheless, Emily thought it better for the veil to remain over her mamma's eyes with respect to Lord Orville, as long as she could keep it there, though it had been removed from her own in a very early stage of her acquaintance with Shirley, by

the discovery that he and his lordship were two distinct and separate individuals. The fact was, that the little dog, Nap, had had his share in leading her into the belief that Frank Shirley was Lord Orville; and he had his share too in showing her that her belief was erroneous. The imposing words "Orville, Trinity" upon his collar, had caught her eye as quickly, one day that he was frolicking round Shirley in the field, as they afterwards had her mamma's when he made acquaintance with her by pulling at her petticoat in the lane. Everybody knows the old adage—"Love me, love my dog!" Now, Nap was a very lovable little dog on his own account, but certainly he was still more so, in Emily's estimation, for belonging to a lord, and that lord, as she flattered herself, her profound admirer. Shirley was seldom without him in his rambles, for Lady Orville, whose pet he was, liked him to take the air whenever he could, and he followed Shirley as naturally and as gaily as if he were indeed his master. Emily, as a matter of course, petted and fondled him whenever she met him, which was indeed every time that she walked out alone, and *happened* to go towards the blacksmith's cottage. One day she met her *innamorato* in great trouble, whistling, calling, looking about him in every direction.

"I have lost little Nap," said he to her, after he had duly expressed his sense of his good fortune in *happening* to have taken the same path with herself; "and I shall be in such disgrace, if I go back to Cambridge without him; I shall be afraid to show myself!"

Miss Emily felt a very unpleasant sort of sensation at her heart, as he said this—it could only be a lady whom he was so afraid of offending, and who took such an interest in Nap, and of course most probably in his master; for the adage of which she had herself felt the truth, naturally recurred to her mind.

"Do not let me take you out of your way!" said she, in rather a tremulous tone, seeing that he was preparing, as usual, to turn back with her. "I am only going to speak to Betty about a little work I have got for her to do."

"Then I shall see you there, for I want to speak to her likewise; and it was very odd that little rascally Nap, that now robs me of the happiness of accompanying you, was at

my heels just as I was going past the cottage, and five minutes after he was out of sight and hearing;" and then he gave another and another shrill whistle, that rang through the hedges, and over the fields, and called most vociferously, "Nap, Nap, Nap." But no Nap answered with his joyous bark and bounding step.

"I hope you will find him, poor little fellow," said Emily, "particularly as the lady," trying to smile, "will be so unhappy if you do not."

"Why, how do you know?" exclaimed Shirley, surprised out of his usual presence of mind by the random shot which had so clearly hit upon a fact. "I did not say——"

Emily hastily pursued her way, without staying to hear what he did, or did not say. When she got to the cottage, she was so pale and fluttered that Betty remarked it, and said,—

"Lork, miss, you don't look well at all—you look as if something had frightened you. One of them cows that feeds about in our lane is a very nasty one; I hope she hasn't meddled with you, any way, miss."

"No," said Emily, "but the little dog that I have seen here so often is lost, and it has vexed me so;" and the tears started into her eyes; what share Nap had in them it might have been difficult to say, but Betty gave him credit for the whole.

"Well, to be sure, miss, what a heart you have! I always say how good you are to me, and poor folks like me; yes, miss, I know you have a very tender heart, I can see that, for all I'm no scholar;" and here Betty gave a knowing look, that made Miss Emily take out her handkerchief, to hide a sudden rush of blood into her face; "so no wonder that you take on so, like, about the poor dumb beast."

"She needn't cry about he," said Blacksmith Jem the less, who, having thrust his curly head in at the half-opened door, had watched with much interest the signs of grief in the countenance of Emily, whose occasional presents of gingerbread and halfpence had inspired him with profound veneration for her. "He isn't lost."

"How do you know, you young good-for-nought?" said Betty; "you've been in mischief all this blessed morning, instead of getting off to school."

"Because I know where he is," said the young Jem.

"How can you know anything about him?"

"Because I caught hold of him when he was a-running past."

"You caught hold of him! I would have caught hold of you, if I had seen you; and what did you do with him?"

"I didn't do nothing with him; he did it himself."

"Did what?" exclaimed Emily, "surely he has not destroyed himself?"

"I don't know what that means," said the boy, staring at her.

"It means killed himself," cried Betty: "you wicked varmint, have you killed him?—he could not kill himself, as a Christian can; no dumb beast has sense for that."

"He hasn't killed himself, and nobody hasn't killed him—he is alive now."

"Alive!" said Emily, starting up; "bring him here directly."

"I can't get him out."

"Why, where have you put him?"

"He put himself in."

"In where?"

"In our well."

"O you wicked boy!" exclaimed Miss Emily, running towards the yard where the well was; "how could he get there if you did not put him in? I will never give you a Christmas-box again."

"I only wanted to ride him up and down, and he would jump out of the bucket. I couldn't stop him."

By this time Betty and Emily were both at the side of the well, and looking into it they saw, sure enough, the unfortunate Nap, at the bottom, in a worse plight even than any the great man after whom he was named had ever been in, whining piteously, with his head just above water, and clinging for his life against the brickwork."

"I'll bring him up," said the young blacksmith, "if mother will lower me down in the bucket."

"O you very moral of your father, for ever in a mischief," exclaimed Betty, preparing the bucket for his descent.

"Hold fast of rope, and stand steady, for if you topple over, we shall never be able to get you out again."

"I went down yesterday for father's hat," said the hero, nothing daunted, "and he did not let me down so quietly as you do."

In a minute the blacksmith junior was within clutching reach of Nap; he seized him by the nape of his neck, in another minute he was safely landed with him on *terra firma*, and delivered him into the keeping of Emily, who rushing with him to the fireside, began shampooing him with the best towel Betty's household stores afforded. When he was thoroughly dry, she finished him off with a sprinkling of *eau de Cologne*, to prevent his taking cold, and was just in the act of that fragrant performance, when Shirley came back, somewhat mortified at his unsuccessful search. He was delighted to see Nap in such fair hands, and poured forth his thanks to Emily for her care of him.

"I should have been so vexed," said he, "to have had to tell his master that I had lost him; it would have seemed so careless."

"But does he not belong to you, dear fellow?" asked Emily, kissing Nap as she spoke, to make it appear that the "dear fellow" was for him, and not his master.

"To me, no, certainly. I thought you knew he belonged to Lord Orville."

"How could I know?" said Emily, beginning to feel herself rather mystified.

"I thought you must have seen the name of Orville upon the collar," said Shirley, pointing it out to her somewhat bewildered eyes.

"Yes, certainly I could not help seeing it, of course, but I thought—that is, I fancied that your name was Orville."

"My name Orville," exclaimed Shirley, laughing; "no, I do not sport one so aristocratic. My name is Frank Shirley, at your service. I thought everybody had known me; but, perhaps——" seeing a shade of something like mortification at this announcement come over the countenance of his fair enslaver, "perhaps you thought I was Lord Orville."

"I certainly did," replied Emily, in some confusion.

"I am afraid you feel yourself disappointed," said Shirley, with a slight expression of sarcasm in his tone, which poor Emily felt she did not deserve, and she replied, somewhat indignantly,—

"Indeed I am not, Lord Orville is nothing to me."

"I wish I were Lord Orville, nevertheless, at this moment," said Shirley, "and it is the first time in my life I ever wished to be anything or anybody but what I am." And here he sighed, very sentimentally, and very sincerely; for the thought that Emily's rapid impression in his favour was owing more to the title and fortune with which her imagination had invested him, than to his own attractions, was so exceedingly the reverse of agreeable to him that he found he in fact annexed a much higher value to her good opinion than, till then, he had been aware of. He was, however, immediately after restored to good-humour with himself, by the reply of Emily, breathed in an answering sigh,

"I do not wish you to be anybody but what you are."

"Do you not, my angel!" he exclaimed, dropping on his knees before her,—

" 'Here then I take thee to my heart for ever,
Thou dear companion of my future days!
Whatever providence allots for each,
That be the future portion of us both.' "

Emily wept with tenderness and admiration at this burst of eloquence, and then smiled through her tears as she assured him that she desired no better fortune than to share his fate, whatever it might be.

"You need not cry about him any more; mother says he'll be no worse for it," interrupted the young blacksmith, who, thrusting his curly head half-way in at the door, had witnessed the tender scene, and thought it was all about Nap the Little.

It was a sad bathos, but it brought the lovers to their senses, by exciting a fit of laughter; and they set off through some of their favourite by-lanes towards the rectory, settling on their road the best method of arranging their future meetings, which were finally referred to the Hermitage, when the weather or prudential considerations might render it unadvisable for them to take place at the cottage.

Shirley had nothing of disguise in his nature or his habits, save that outward assumption of it which belonged to his profession. His keeping back his name from Emily during the first part of his acquaintance, arose merely from the simple fact, that he thought he had told it to her at the

moment when he had broken off to apologize to Dawkins, for having "galled his kibe." He thought it likely enough that a clergyman, who wore a shovel-hat like Doctor Pluffy's, would not approve of the attentions of a wandering star like himself, and therefore he did not feel either surprised or piqued at Emily appearing to wish to keep her acquaintance with him secret; but, in point of actual circumstances, he knew himself so fully able to secure her all the comforts of independence the moment he might choose to communicate to his parents his intention to marry her, that he felt he was doing nothing dishonourable in endeavouring to gain her affections, without running the risk of repulse from her family, by asking their leave to follow his own inclinations. On this eventful morning, these inclinations were heightened and confirmed. He saw that Emily loved him, and for his own sake; and this was all he cared about. His mind once made up, he soon informed both Lord Orville and Courtney of the change he contemplated making in his condition; and they were both too sincerely interested in his welfare not to rejoice at the prospect of his domestication.

"I like the girl for her own sake, as she likes me for mine; and I like her for that too. When I was first acquainted with her, she did me the honour of imagining that I was no less a personage than your lordship; and when she afterwards found out how thoroughly she was mistaken, she told me, with such earnestness, that she did not wish me to be anybody but myself, my 'gracious self,' the precious god of her idolatry, that I fully believed her, and felt a profound respect for her judgment, and gratitude for her affection, ever after. She is a little romantic, to be sure; but so am I—at least, I was; but now I shall take a new cast of parts. I shall become a steady old fellow;"

"'Sit like my grandsire, cut in alabaster;'

though never, I hope,

"'Creep into the jaundice by being peevish;'

and my father and mother will delight in a daughter-in-law, because they will be sure that she will keep me at home, and tread with me in the good old ways of my forefathers."

Such was Shirley's history of his love affair. Lord Orville clapped him on the back.

"Bravo! my boy," said he; "you are in for it. You will be one of us—there is nothing like it. And now, Shirley, remember you promised me, whenever you were in any serious scrape, to come to me. Now there cannot be anything more serious than matrimony happen to mortal man: so mind, if you want money, draw upon me; horses, ride mine; a father for the bride, call upon me; and, by the bye, you must introduce me to the lady."

"Your lordship will be calling at the rectory."

"Oh, no; I will not wait for that. I don't want to make acquaintance with that grampus-faced doctor and his carneying wife—still, I suppose, I must call one day or other."

And so the matter dropped; but a day or two after, his lordship, being on horseback, met the happy pair arm-in-arm, or, rather, hand-in-hand, pacing up and down one of those shady lanes that seem as if they wound about, and waved their green branches across and over head, expressly to invite lovers into their seclusion. He gave Shirley a very knowing look, which Shirley very silyly returned, then making him the salutations of the morning he dismounted, and begged the honour of being presented to the young lady, "to whose care, he believed, he was indebted for the recovery of his little dog, as Mr. Shirley had informed him." So Shirley said, "Permit me, Lord Orville, Miss Emily Eleanora Pluffy," and his lordship, with his bridle over his arm, took a turn or two with the lady and gentleman, and then took his leave, with a hope that he might be equally fortunate another morning; and Emily was quite charmed with his condescension, and it was understood, from that time, that his lordship was to be admitted into the confidence of the parties, and join them whenever he thought proper.

And so matters went on. Mrs. Pluffy, every now and then, seeing Lord Orville's grey horse in the lane just under the wall of the Hermitage, and every now and then detecting a book with Lord Orville's name in it, borrowed by Shirley, to read some rapturous passage to Emily, and forgotten in the "delightful misery" of parting. The good lady not only felt certain that Lord Orville was Emily's

lover, but succeeded in inspiring her husband with the same confidence.

One morning Simpson came with a face full of importance to Mrs. Pluffy, who was in her store-room, taking a rough estimate of her last year's pickles and preserves.

"If you please, ma'am," said she, shutting the door and lowering her voice to a whisper, "I hope you won't be affronted at what I am a-going to say."

"No, to be sure, Simpson," said Mrs. Pluffy, bridling up, in the expectation of hearing the accustomed form of warning—Please ma'am to provide yourself. "I never want anybody to stay with me that fancy they can better themselves; such places as mine are not likely to be at a loss for respectable servants to fill them."

"Oh dear, no, ma'am! that everybody knows that knows anything; but it was not myself that I was thinking of. I'm sure I should be very sorry to think of leaving such a good mistress; but it is Miss Emily I was a-going to take the liberty of telling you about."

"Why, what of Miss Emily?" said Mrs. Pluffy, her face turning the colour of the currant-jelly she was just then refreshing with a fresh brandy-paper. "Is she not well?"

"O yes, ma'am, do not frighten yourself; she seems very well; but I really do think, ma'am, you'll excuse me, I hope, for saying so, that she certainly has got something in her head."

Mrs. Pluffy did not seem so surprised at this communication as many mammas would have been; on the contrary, she went on papering her preserves, and bending down to inspect their condition, even more closely than before, as she said very coolly, "What makes you think so, Simpson?"

"Why ma'am, I hope you won't be offended at my taking notice of things, but, to be sure, servants can't always sit with their eyes shut, any more than with their hands before them, and I certainly did see that the last time Miss Emily went to Cambridge, in the carriage, she brought a long piece of white satin ribbon back with her, and a long white muslin veil, at least I fancied it was a veil, but it might only be a curtain for the 'Ermitage, for I know she was saying it wanted a curtain, and a pair of white kid gloves she bought as well—shorts."

"Well, Simpson, there is nothing very wonderful in Miss Emily buying a few things when she goes to Cambridge."

"No, ma'am, I don't say there is. I'm sure I don't wonder at anybody buying things, that has money to buy them with; but coachman says that young Lord Orville was a-going past as the carriage stood at the shop-door, and that he took off his hat to Miss Emily, and then put his head right in at the window, and had a long talk with her; to be sure it might be haccident."

"It might, Simpson. Accidents will happen."

"But I don't think, ma'am, it can be haccident that Miss Emily has put up some things in a band-box, this morning, and a chaise is waiting under the garden wall, and so I thought, perhaps, you would like to take a look at it, perhaps just to see if you knew where it might have come from."

"Well, you did right enough, Simpson, to tell me. I will just give a look over the garden wall, as soon as I have tied these preserves down, but I dare say it is all right. Miss Emily has been talking of going a little way into the country some time—it would do her good, the doctor thought. So you need not say any more about it, Simpson, and I shall look over my silk dresses, that plum-colour would turn again very nicely for you."

"Thank you, ma'am. I thought you would like to know about Miss Emily, but of course it's all right."

Mrs. Pluffy did not hurry herself over her preserves, and when at length she looked over the wall, no chaise was to be seen, which was no ways surprising, as Simpson had taken good care to watch it out of sight and sound before she came with her information to her mistress.

Mrs. Pluffy finding that Emily was really gone, directed her steps to the Hermitage, in the idea that it might throw some light upon the circumstances connected with her departure. She was not mistaken. Emily, fully aware that her mamma had for some time past taken secret cognizance of her proceedings there, made herself sure that it would be the first place in which she would be looked for. She therefore, according to established precedent, had left a few lines upon the little wooden table whereon Shirley had first rested his elbows, to gaze upon her in

admiration, to beg her dear mamma and papa would not be uneasy at her absence, and that in a very few days she should write to them, with further accounts of an event which would, she doubted not, greatly increase the happiness of the whole family, as well as her own.

This general statement, however, would not have been enough to set Mrs. Pluffy's mind quite at ease, had not the hope to which it gave rise been strengthened, almost into certainty, by the fragment of a note which Shirley had accidentally dropped, and which was conveyed by a slight breeze to Mrs. Pluffy's feet, along with a few dead leaves and the remains of a cigar. It had been torn across, for the purpose of infolding in its correspondent half the leaves of a rose, which Emily had plucked to pieces in a fit of sentimental abstraction while listening to the honeyed accents of her lover, and which he declared too precious to be thrown away, having graced her bosom only the minute before.

The note, in its original state, had run thus :—

"DEAR SHIRLEY,—To-morrow morning we shall be on our way to the Hall. My heart throbs with anxiety and impatience to see my dear father, who, I fear, is very unwell. My sweet and lovely Julia will remain at Beech Cottage, until I find a fit opportunity to declare our marriage to the earl. If he forgives and blesses us, our felicity will be complete. Perhaps when I see you again, you may have engrafted yourself into the Pluffy family, by taking the gentle Emily to your bosom; there may she 'prosper, bud, and bloom.'

"And may the ancient groves of Maltravers long witness your increasing happiness.

"Ever faithfully yours,

"ORVILLE."

The garbled portion of it which fell to Mrs. Pluffy's share, called forth her ingenuity by arranging it, filling up the gaps with her own sagacious conjectures, as follows :—

"To-morrow morning we shall be on our way to the Hall. My heart throbs with anxiety and impatience to see my dear and lovely (Emily), at Beech Cottage, until I declare my marriage to the earl—our felicity will be complete, engrafted into the Pluffy family by taking the gentle Emily to (my) bosom.

"May the ancient groves of Maltravers long witness—(the) increasing happiness (of)

"Sir, faithfully yours,

"ORVILLE."

This was quite enough for Mrs. Pluffy. She walked into the house with her daughter's note, and the fragment of Lord Orville's, precious to her eyes as the remnant of the Sibyl's leaves in those of antiquity, and showed them both triumphantly to the doctor.

"It does indeed look like it, my dear," said the doctor, settling his spectacles on the upper part of his forehead, and elevating his eyebrows, as he looked into his wife's face; "and if so, I must say it may be a great thing for us, and comes most opportunely. You see he evidently has no thought of cutting us,—talks of being engrafted into the Pluffy family; and, most assuredly, with the Maltravers' interest, the Pluffy family may come to be something that a son-in-law, even a titled one, need not be ashamed of."

"To be sure not, doctor; and perhaps now Mr. Courtney may think more of Augusta—who knows!"

"Why, my dear, Mr. Courtney, I am afraid, we must give up. I heard yesterday, only I did not like to mention it to you, that he is actually going to marry Mr. Slender's eldest daughter."

"No, surely! What an artful girl she must be! And how cunning that Mr. Slender, with all his pretended simplicity and religion! But I cannot believe it, Doctor Pluffy, and never will. I do not think Mr. Courtney ever spoke a word to either Mr. Slender, or his daughters, in his life."

"I rather believe he knows more of them than you fancy. At any rate, I think I shall offer to let Mr. Slender continue the curacy, if he likes. It is as well to make friends with all parties, and I should not like Mr. Courtney to fancy I had been hard upon him."

Nothing but the thought of her titled son-in-law could have consoled Mrs. Pluffy for the discovery that Clement Courtney was likely to slip through her fingers; but too much flattered and elated, at that moment, to allow anything to cloud the splendid visions that were beginning to throng her fancy, she went to communicate the intelligence respecting Emily to Miss Pluffy, who received it with an air of the deepest mortification, and to consult with her upon the best footing upon which to place Emily's disappearance to the household.

The doctor, meanwhile, rode over to Cambridge, in the

hope of softening the heart of his wine-merchant, who had written him a very peremptory letter the day before, demanding the payment of his long outstanding account, in terms quite the opposite of the obsequiousness of his personal deportment.

Doctor Pluffy, aware of the number of similar claims upon him, trembled at the thought of the train that might be fired by the explosion of a single spark; doubly, trebly unfortunate would it be if any of his creditors should proceed to extremities with him, just when the apparent success of Mrs. Pluffy's manœuvres respecting Lord Orville promised to secure him all the effective assistance he stood so much in need of. He ventured to give the wine-merchant some mysterious hints relative to the approaching marriage of his daughter—he felt some qualms as to speaking of it as a thing certain—with a young nobleman of immense property, from whom he was sure of receiving whatever temporary aid he might require.

"The fact is," continued the doctor, "I should not want any assistance at all, but my son has been, I am sorry to say, a little thoughtless. Young men will be, you know, particularly when they are among high connections; and his being so intimate with Lord Orville——"

Here the doctor checked himself, the name uppermost in his mind had rolled off his tongue unawares, but the wine-merchant caught it up in an instant.

"May I take the liberty to ask, sir," he said, "if it be Lord Orville that you have in your eye as likely to stand your friend?"

"Why, to tell you the truth, though of course you will not let it go any further just at present, it is Lord Orville that I hope to have the honour of——"

"I think, sir, there must be some mistake," interrupted the wine-merchant; "I know something of his lordship, and I am not aware that just now there is any reason why I may not say that I believe his lordship has been married some time, though it was not generally known."

"Impossible, sir!" exclaimed the doctor, turning very yellow.

The wine-merchant handed him the *Norfolk Chronicle*, placing his finger on a paragraph in large letters:—

"Yesterday morning, in the seventy-fifth year of his age, at Maltravers Hall, the Right Honourable the Earl of Maltravers. His lordship is succeeded in his titles and estates by his only son and heir, Henry, Baron Orville, born May 10th, 18—, and married October 5th, 18—, to Julia, only daughter of the late George Courtney, Esq., of Courtney Park, in the county of Norfolk.

"On account of the youth of the parties when the marriage was contracted, it was judged advisable not to publish it to the world; but we understand that the noble earl had the pleasure of seeing his daughter-in-law before his decease, and of bequeathing his blessing to his infant grandson."

A cold perspiration broke out upon the forehead of the doctor. He staggered to a chair. The wine-merchant was alarmed. Fortunately he had plenty of "samples" at hand, and speedily found some that were efficacious. The doctor revived, and went to the door for air. At that instant a chaise drove by; he caught a glimpse of a lady within. She had a veil over her face, but it blew back, and showed him the features of Emily. She was seated beside a young man, who seemed all life and animation. The wine-merchant touched his hat as they passed, but the young couple only saw each other.

"Do you know that gentleman?" asked the doctor, in a faltering voice, keeping quite silent about his daughter.

"Why, sir, I certainly do know him—he is not quite a gentleman, that is, he is professional—Mr. Shirley, the player."

The doctor lifted up his eyes with such an appealing look to Heaven for patience, that the wine-merchant, taking it for a censure upon himself for having such profane acquaintance, hastened to put the professional gentleman in as fair a point of view as he could.

"Though, to be sure, sir, he is quite a gentleman, as for that—in his behaviour, and in ordering, too, and in paying for what he gets. He has had the best articles in my stock, and I have never had to wait for my money."

This remark did not give the doctor more courage.

"Well, Mr. Blincop," said he, in a feeble voice that bore out his assertion, "I am not well to-day—you see I am not; but I will call again in a day or two."

"It must be to-morrow, sir, if you please, and not later."

"Well, to-morrow, we will say, then," said the doctor, as, with a heavy heart, and steps still heavier, he turned from the wine-merchant's, and went to the Wheat Sheaf, the sign

of which he had recognized on the door of the chaise containing Emily and Shirley.

The doctor found on arriving at the inn,—for it was one of the few places of public entertainment that did not aspire to be called an hotel,—that a chaise had gone out, a quarter of an hour before, with a lady and gentleman ; and the ostler said he rather thought they had gone Creykedale way. The doctor instantly ordered a chaise for the same place. It was, to be sure, long past canonical hours, but it was still possible that he might recover his daughter, and rescue himself from the disgrace of having a strolling player for a son-in-law. To describe Mrs. Plufty's fretting and vexation when dinner was ready and the doctor absent, her devices to keep everything hot and her fear lest everything should be spoiled, her increasing anxiety as the evening advanced and still he came not, and her dismay when he at length made his appearance with intelligence that shook all her castles in the air into annihilation, would only be to take a pleasure in dissecting the miseries of human life ; and though the greater part of them may be caused, as in the present instance, by the follies and dishonesties of the parties complaining of their grievances, yet as we have no satisfaction in dwelling longer than necessary on the wrong side of human nature, we shall change the scene for one more congenial to our contemplations.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

It is impossible for me to describe the happiness that is shed over our humble home by the now daily presence of the estimable young man whom I am so soon to call my son-in-law. I have, at times, regretted that I had not a son to succeed me in my ministry ; but, verily, I cannot think my heart could ever have yearned over one of my own more than it does over him, who seems mercifully sent to me, in the goodness of the Divine Providence, to be the comfort and support of my old age.

He has always some excuse or other for loading us with kindnesses. He has carpeted our rooms afresh, because,

according to his account, his upholsterer having made a mistake in his directions, had ordered more for him than he wanted. He has sent me a most comfortable library-chair, with a little frame for a book and candle, ingeniously turning on a swivel, because I happened to describe that which had struck my fancy so much at Mr. Wilson's ; and he tells me that he has got duplicate copies of some authors I have long wished to possess, and that he will let me have them. He has likewise entreated my acceptance of a gold watch, which was his own father's, and which I therefore consider as the strongest proof of his regard that he could give me. It is, moreover, to me a most useful present, having been forced to part with my own years ago, but I must be careful how I take it out before people, it is so handsome that it would look like ostentation. Then, as to my girls, he would never come to them empty-handed, if I would let him have his own way : but he sees I always look grave, if he throws his money about him too fast ; it may only be the thoughtlessness of youth, but I think, if he has a fault, it is a tendency to extravagance—it is the only one I have ever seen in him, but it may, nevertheless, expose him to future inconvenience. Still he does everything so cheerily and so kindly that I do not like to damp him. He makes Lucy as many presents as he does her sister : he calls her the little housekeeper, and has delighted her exceedingly with a pretty tea-service of Worcester china, also flower-jars of the same, and, moreover, a worked footstool, for a throne for her cat, he tells her. I was seriously pained, however, yesterday, when I saw him take out of his pocket two little red morocco cases,—one for Margaret, and the other for Lucy,—and found that they each contained a set of pearl ornaments. I thought myself called upon to put a stop to such profuseness at once, and I told him that though things of that kind, if he could really afford to buy them, might not be misplaced occasionally, upon Margaret, as his wife, after she was married, yet that for Lucy they must ever be worse than useless, improper, and unbecoming ; and that I must entreat him never to offer her any gifts but such as were fitting the station in which he had found her, and in which it was, in all probability, her lot to remain. He seemed a little hurt at the earnestness with which I spoke.

"My dear sir," he said, "I should be very sorry to wound your delicacy in any way—on the contrary, it is from respect to it that I have forborne to indulge my own feelings, and have limited my tokens of affection to the merest trifles. These pearls, for instance, they are pretty, because they are strung with so much simplicity of taste—at least, they appeared so to me—but they are very light, and not at all expensive of their sort."

Margaret could not bear to see a shadow of vexation on his brow.

"They are, indeed, very elegant," said she; "so delicate, such a pretty pattern. Pray, my dear father, let us accept them, this once, for Clement's sake, and he shall promise you, in return, never to bring us any more presents, on any pretence whatsoever."

"Nay," said Clement, "I cannot promise that, not yet, at any rate, for I have ventured—Mr. Slender must not be angry with me for it—to order a *trousseau* for my Margaret, but I have given directions for it to be very simple."

"Like these pearls, I suppose," said I, trying to look very grave, though, in fact, I did not know what he meant by a *trousseau*, no more did my girls, as I saw clearly enough by their looks. I fancied, however, it might be some sort of little carriage, so I went on: "Margaret has always been accustomed to make good use of her feet, but I dare say she will think any sort of vehicle, you may like to provide for her very agreeable, if there is a place in it for yourself at her side."

He laughed as heartily, when I said this, as he used to do sometimes in the beginning of our acquaintance, when we fell into *équivoques* with him about the players. He did not, however, enter into any further explanation as to what he really meant, though it struck me afterwards that this mysterious word *trousseau* had something to do with articles of dress; for, taking my hand, he said, "Well then, my dear sir, it is understood between us that I have your permission to furnish the *trousseau*, and that my dear Margaret will make me happy by accepting it; in which case, the things that may be requisite for Monday"—and here my sweet girl's cheeks were mantled with a rich vermillion, and she cast her eyes to the ground—"will be here on

Saturday. And, meanwhile, may I be permitted to try these poor unlucky pearls on the fair arms and necks that will so well become them?" He then opened the little cases again, and decked Margaret's golden tresses, and Lucy's darker locks, each with a delicate quivering spray; and then Margaret took out the necklaces, and bracelets, and ear-rings, and brooches herself, and fastened them first on Lucy, and then on herself; and then they both turned to Clement, with a smile and a blush, that made them look prettier than all their ornaments could do, and thanked him for them; and then he repaid himself with a kiss on the smooth cheek of each, and then they kissed me, too; and it would have been difficult to say which of all the little party was the happiest.

"There," said Lucy, after fondly admiring her sister, and giving herself one approving look in the glass, "I shall take mine off now. I have been a fine lady full five minutes—bedecked in pearls—who would ever have thought it! What a shame to have laid out so much money upon *me*!"

"That is a forbidden subject, mischief-maker!" said Clement. "Now you will see that I shall bring you something else to-morrow to punish you."

I have had a very agreeable surprise to-day. Clement, who acts with as much generosity to my dear Margaret as if she were to bring him a fortune equal to his deserts, told me last week that he should wish to secure a provision to her, in case of her surviving him; and that the rough draft of the settlement would, with my leave, for he is always as polite as he is kind, be sent to him here, for his perusal. This afternoon it arrived, and to my very great pleasure the bearer of it was no other than the worthy Mr. Catchpole. I was exceedingly glad to see him; for I shall never forget his kindness to me in my time of trouble, and I am afraid, in my haste to welcome him, I rather gave his arm a jerk, for I had forgotten his hook, and I saw him raise his left hand for a moment to his shoulder. He smiled, however, very cordially, and said, as he pulled a thick parchment out of his breast-pocket (lawyers use so many words), "I am happy to see you again, sir. I come from Mr. Wilson, the solicitor, at

Norwich, with the rough draft of a deed of settlement, for Mr. Courtney's perusal."

"And I, sir," said I to him, "am also happy to see you again; and happier still that we meet on business of so much pleasanter nature than that which first introduced us to each other."

"I assure you, sir," said the good man, "that my pleasure now is exactly in proportion to the pain I felt when I saw you and your amiable daughters in such trouble; and I doubt not that you will be equally glad to hear that the griefs and vexations I was then labouring under myself, have also passed away, and you now see me most contented and grateful."

He did indeed look ten years younger than the only time before that I had ever seen him, and was, moreover, most respectably dressed. I congratulated him upon the evident improvement in his condition, and he proceeded to say that he had to thank me in great part for it, as owing to the mention Mr. Courtney had made of him to Mr. Wilson, who was his solicitor, that gentleman sent for him, and after a circumstantial conversation with him, told him that he had just had the misfortune to be robbed to a considerable amount by his collecting-clerk, who had absconded with the money; that it was of the utmost importance to find a confidential person in place of the defaulter, and that from what he had heard of Mr. Catchpole through Mr. Courtney, and judged of himself in the discourse he had had with him, he felt inclined to offer him the situation, with a salary of a hundred guineas a year. The poor man was too happy in the thought of relinquishing a way of life so repugnant to his feelings as that which he was then following, to hesitate; he gratefully accepted the offer, and the next day found himself installed in his post. He now resolved to seek out his long-loved Elizabeth, for he heard that her husband had departed this life some months before, and he had now the satisfaction of thinking that at any rate he should have the means of adding something to the comforts which her peculiar situation might require. This account of their first interview I thought very affecting, though given with his usual quiet simplicity.

"I found her," said he, "less altered in appearance than I

had feared ; there was the same gentle, affectionate manner that she had when a girl ; and her attendant told me that since the death of her husband a favourable change had taken place in her frame of mind. She had gradually lost the sort of terror with which she used to look around her, and had seemed to feel herself more at liberty, though she had not manifested any desire to change her abode. She knew me the moment I went in, though it was many a year since we had last seen each other, and then but for a moment. She came up to me, and looking very wistfully in my face, put her hand into mine, and burst into tears. I wept too. ' Ah ! ' said she, ' you love me still ; ' her voice sounded so soft, so sweet in my ears, poor thing ! ' but, ' and she looked uneasily round the room, ' will he not be angry if he sees you here ? '

" The attendant, who seemed a mild and decent person, touched the sleeve of her black dress. ' Do not you remember, ' said she, ' that you had to go into mourning a little while ago ? ' ' Yes, ' she said, with a bewildered air ; ' did not somebody tell me my husband was dead ? ' And she looked at me so inquiringly, poor thing. The attendant made me a sign that she had better not be agitated, and, with a heavy heart, I took her hand to bid her farewell. ' Will you not come again to see me ? ' said she, ' you used to like to be with me. Perhaps my husband will not object to my seeing you sometimes, now that he is dead. ' Then she put her hand to her forehead, and said, ' I am afraid I talk confusedly ; yet, somehow, it does me good to talk to you. ' I promised I would go again the next day, and I did ; and the next, and every day since : and, at last, I have the happiness to see her faculties recover themselves, her memory returned, and her health altogether re-established. I contrived to interest her in little occupations, which I told her would be useful to me. I bought some printed calico, for window curtains and a sofa-cover : she was delighted to make them, for she was always industrious and neat in everything she did ; and as the images of her early days began to revisit her mind, the more painful recollections of her later ones gradually faded from it. The head of the establishment, whom I should pronounce a very honest and humane man, told me that her malady had always been mild in its

character, and the cause being, he considered, removed, he had not, himself, the slightest apprehension of her ever having any return of it. And as for that, I asked myself, where, if she had, could she be so well as under my own immediate care? Her husband left her an annuity of fifty pounds a year, which, with my salary, will be amply enough for all that we require; so we have agreed to join our hands and fortunes as soon as her year of widowhood shall be expired. Our youth has been blighted, but our hearts have never been separated; and I am thankful that our remaining days will be spent together. I dare say," he continued, with his grave smile, "I should not have been so happy if I had come to be Lord Chancellor."

And so he concluded his little history; and then he congratulated me upon the approaching marriage of my daughter, and with such an excellent young man too. I thought it a pleasing coincidence that he should have been made the bearer of the deed. I insisted upon his staying dinner; it was nicely served. Rose waited upon us with the baby in her arms, and when the table was cleared, Margaret took him upon her lap, and Mr. Catchpole patted his dimpled cheeks, and took his little hand into his own, and seemed to compare them together, with a sort of affectionate sadness, as if he was calculating what might happen in the interval before one should be as large as the other. I hope, poor man, the remainder of his own days will be spent in peace and love.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MY AUNT AND COUSINS.

DEEPLY and truly as Clement Courtney was in love with Margaret Slender, almost from the first moment of his beholding her, he had not followed up his acquaintance with her without questioning himself, in the very earliest stages of it, as to its probable results. Too virtuous to indulge a thought of taking any dishonourable advantage of the affection which it was his happiness to hope he might be able to inspire in her gentle and innocent heart, too generous, too

tender, to think of amusing himself with it, for the passing moment, at the risk to her of

"That sweet peace which goodness begets ever,"

and which he had found her in full possession of, amid all her privations, he had speedily settled it with himself, that if he continued to visit her, it must be as an avowed suitor for her hand. Nevertheless, his resolve though prompt, was not rash; and had Margaret known the chain of reasoning by which he arrived at it, her admiration of his generosity, and her confidence in his principles, would have been increased tenfold.

The inheritor of a name and property bequeathed from father to son for ages without blot or burthen, he considered it his bounden duty to transmit them equally unsullied, equally unincumbered, to his posterity. He held marriage to be an indispensable duty in all conditions of men; and more particularly in the aristocracy, esteeming it as he did the ornament and safeguard of the country, which he loved to believe the most powerful, the wisest, and the best among nations; to marriage then, well-assorted, equal in condition, and entered upon with feelings as holy as the sacred tie that makes it binding, he had looked, ever since the death of his parents, as the event that was to restore to him the social comforts of his home, and to fix his position and pursuits in society. Respecting the first and last of the propositions he had laid down to himself, he was perfectly well satisfied with his contemplated union; but the intervening one might admit of argument: still these arguments would be solely of a worldly nature, and he was not dependent upon the world, and though he respected to a certain degree its received opinions, he was not to be trammelled by its prejudices. The only persons whose approbation he felt himself bound to consult, were his sister and his aunt Lady Maitland.

We have already seen how readily Julia entered into his views, and seconded them with all her heart; but Lady Maitland was a woman of the world, and, as such, saw all objects submitted to her mental vision in a worldly point of view. She was his mother's sister, and greatly resembled her in features; she might have equally resembled her in

disposition and habits, had not their fortunes cast them into exactly opposite circumstances. Mr. Courtney was a country gentleman of the old school ; passing most of his time upon his own estates, and contented with the sphere of duty they opened to him. Lord Maitland was a leader alike in politics and fashion, and a gay, dashing, thoughtless man into the bargain. Hence, Lady Maitland became under his guidance, a star of the first magnitude in the *haut monde*, whilst Mrs. Courtney remained the gentle, excellent domestic character for which nature had intended her.

Lord Maitland's extravagance knew no bounds ; his wife, finding her influence utterly powerless in stemming it, abandoned herself along with him to the stream, thinking she had, at any rate, a right to her share of the flowers that might float upon its surface. Her husband was, however, taken from her in the prime of life, and the full career of dissipation, and she was left with a jointure very inadequate to the style in which she had lived ever since her marriage, and with two daughters, who had only the reversion of that jointure to look to, the estates having fallen to a distant relation, in default of a male heir.

Lady Maitland regretted her lord very sincerely, for they had been what is usually termed a happy couple ; neither of them interfering with, or intrenching upon, the privileges of the other ; and she felt acutely, becoming the comparative blank in society which is the general fate of dowagers of rank superior to their income. She was not a woman, however, to sink under sorrow of any kind, and having steadily *envisaged* her position, or, in plain English, looked it in the face, she immediately set about accommodating herself to it accordingly. Her first step was to find out that change of air was requisite for her health ; her next, to take her departure, with her daughters, for the Continent, where, with occasional returns to England, they resided ten years, making the regular routine of Paris, the German Baths, Florence, Rome, and Naples, at the stated periods when the thermometer of fashion indicated the season of emigration from one centre of attraction to another.

The Honourable Misses Maitland were extremely handsome and extremely accomplished. They both spoke French, German, and Italian : both played and sang ~~so~~

well, as to be in constant requisition at the *soirées musicales* in their circle : both drew as well as could be desired, and painted rather better than necessary ; both danced in the most elegant and lady-like style, and the manners of both were the pink of perfection ; yet, to the disgrace of the taste and discernment of the bachelors and widowers by whom they were surrounded, they both saw themselves rapidly approaching that period when ladies in single blessedness

“ Pause in suspense upon the point of prime.”

To be sure they had both acknowledged to each other in confidence, that they would never accept any untitled suitor, and both had made a mental reservation in favour of their cousin Clement Courtney. They had all been very much together whilst little more than children, and some of Clement's gayest days were associated with his meetings with his cousins afterwards, whilst he was abroad. He had a real regard for them, and not only a great affection for his aunt, but also a deference for her opinions, which made the manner in which he should break his intention to her of giving her a new niece, a matter of earnest and almost anxious consideration.

The first thing was to present himself *in propria persona* ; accordingly one fine morning, just as all the three ladies, who, by way of changing the field, were spending the spring campaign in London, were preparing for their drive in the park, the door was thrown open, and Mr. Courtney immediately followed the announcement of his name. It is needless to say how joyfully he was received : when did a young man with ten thousand a year ever fail of being welcomed from the very bottom of the human heart ! Lady Maitland, moreover, did actually love her nephew very much ; and would have been delighted to have him call her mother instead of aunt. All thoughts of the drive were immediately renounced, the carriage was dismissed, luncheon ordered in its place, and round the magic circle of a well-covered table gaiety and good humour prevailed.

“ I am so glad to see you among us again, my dear Clement,” said his aunt ; “ I could not imagine what had become of you ; I suppose you are now for the season come to town.”

"No, I am not thinking of it at present ; I am going in a few days to Courtney Lodge."

"But you will be very dull there, at this time of the year, all alone."

Clement's heart gave sundry lively knocks against his bosom. "For that reason," said he, with as much composure as he could command, "I do not intend to be alone."

His cousins opened their eyes somewhat wider at this declaration, whilst Lady Maitland drew the lids of hers nearer to each other, and looked at him earnestly, as from a masked battery. "What," said she, "are we to understand, then, that you are going to be married?"

Clement felt mightily relieved by this plain question, and returned to it the plain answer, "I am." And then, from some intuitive feeling, he played with his wine-glass, and looked anywhere rather than in the faces of his cousins, in one of which, had he done so, he would have seen a slight accession of colour, and in the other, a slight abstraction of it. There was a moment's silence, but Lady Maitland hastened to break it.

"And may I ask the name of the lady whom you propose to present to me as my niece?"

"Her name is Slender," said Courtney, "Margaret Slender;" and his voice melted in spite of himself as he pronounced it.

"The Slenders of Warwickshire?" asked Lady Maitland.

"No! the Slenders of Creykedale," he replied, with a smile which he could not suppress.

"Creykedale! Creykedale!" repeated his aunt, "I do not know where that is."

"The name of her father's place, I suppose," said the elder Miss Maitland, in a tone of more *aigreur* than she was conscious of.

"It is the name of the place where her father does duty," said Clement, with most praiseworthy calmness.

"Duty!" exclaimed Lady Maitland, so utterly taken by surprise at the word that her half-closed eyes opened to their utmost limits; "what! is he a clergyman?"

"He is," said Clement, "and an honour to his sacred calling."

"I presume," said Lady Maitland, somewhat consoled by

the word honour, to which she annexed only one idea, "he is high in the church."

"He is not very high either in the church or out of it," said Clement, with another smile, which, however, found no encouragement, as he added, "for he is a little man, and a curate."

"A curate, no, surely!" said Lady Maitland in accents of alarm and sorrow; "you must be jesting with us; you cannot, Clement—you cannot mean to say that you are going to marry a curate's daughter!"

"Yes, aunt, I do mean to say it," replied Clement gravely, "I am going to marry a curate's daughter; and what is more, I esteem myself most fortunate, most happy, in being able to obtain her."

The beautiful lip of Miss Maitland perceptibly curved; her sister Georgiana hid whatever she might feel on this avowal under an ironical laugh. "How long have you been so humble?" she inquired; "we saw no signs of your forming so modest an estimate of yourself when you were with us at Florence last year."

"Oh! then I was a coxcomb," said Clement, laughing in his turn; "I am better taught now."

Lady Maitland could not join in the *persiflage*. She thought, naturally enough, that her nephew had been caught by some pretty face in a village; and she was seriously grieved that a young man of his handsome fortune and honourable standing in society should be thinking of a *mésalliance* that must inevitably, according to her view of the case, expose him to a thousand mortifications and inconveniences, which, however, he might, in the ardour of a lover, overlook the possibility of, he would too soon find out as a husband. She rose abruptly from table, her countenance flushed with an expression of displeasure, which it very rarely exhibited, and threw herself into her *fauteuil* near the fire, holding a hand-screen before her face, in order to give herself time to recover her wonted placidity of manner. Her daughters followed her example in leaving the table, and placed themselves on the sofa; Clement petitioned for a seat between them, and twined an arm round the waist of each with the affectionate familiarity he had always been accustomed to show them.

"Well, my dear aunt," he said, after waiting a minute or two in the hope that she would renew the conversation, "have you nothing more to say to me? I came here on purpose to tell you and my cousins of the important change I am about to make in my condition, and I receive neither congratulations nor exhortations, nor anything else. You hide your face behind that screen so effectually that I cannot even guess what you are thinking of. My lovely cousins neither scold me nor coax me, though they know very well I always expect they will do one or the other; you are all as silent and solemn as if I had told you that I was concocting high treason, or some monster forgery from one end of the Continent to the other, or any other enormity."

Thus called upon, Lady Maitland laid aside her screen, and said very gravely, "As to congratulating you, Clement, the mere finding a wife is a thing so very easy to achieve, that I do not look upon that as anything in itself that calls for congratulation; and if by exhortation you mean advice, I have no right to offer you any; and even if I had, I have not lived till now, without finding out that any advice which goes against the inclinations of the party to whom it may be addressed, is always ill received, and never followed." Tears of mingled vexation and concern suffused her eyes, as she spoke; and in her look of sorrow there was such a resemblance to the mild expression of his mother, that Clement was greatly moved.

"My dear aunt," he said, "you know how dearly I have ever loved you, and my cousins—had they *not* been my cousins," and as he spoke each felt a slight pressure against her heart, which gave a momentary impetus to its pulsations, "I might not have had a heart to offer at Creykedale, or anywhere else."

It was an admirable stroke, for each, believing herself the favoured one he meant to allude to, put a hand in his, and a gleam of sunshine broke through the gloom. Nor was Courtney insincere in what he said. He had been in habits of intimacy with his cousins long before they were the showy young women of fashion and the world, which a ten years' search after aggrandizement had made them, and they had quite charms enough in the beauty and hilarity of their youth to captivate any young man who might be admitted

to the unrestrained intercourse which the relationship between Clement and themselves permitted ; but his father and mother had a decided objection to marriages between kindred so nearly allied, believing that such unions tended to narrow the affections, concentrating them too closely in the same selfish relations, and to perpetuate and strengthen hereditary evils whether of the moral or physical constitution. Hence it was that Courtney's affection for his cousins had never passed the limits of friendship, though to a certain degree, it had perhaps unconsciously operated as a barrier to his cultivating a warmer feeling for any of the young ladies whom he might bring into comparison with them. He felt, however, that his inuendo had succeeded. He had mollified two-thirds of the enemy ; he now renewed the attack on his aunt.

"I had far rather, dear aunt, that you would speak fully to me : if you have objections to my marriage, state them freely ; perhaps it will be in my power to remove them, and, at any rate, they may be of use to me in my future conduct, and I shall be obliged to you for your sincerity."

"As to your marrying, my dear Clement," Lady Maitland replied, in a somewhat more conciliating tone, "no one can disapprove of that, provided you marry suitably. I hold it to be one of the first duties of the aristocracy to marry early, and as much among themselves as possible. I do not mean cousins,"—and the hectic of a moment passed across her cheek,—"that is nearer than I should ever have approved ;"—(O Lady Maitland !)—"but so as to condense property, and keep old names together ; and not bring in a set of people into the court calendar that were never heard of out of their own market-town." Here it was Clement's cheek that showed the hectic, and Lady Maitland felt that she was going too far. "You have one of the finest properties in Cambridgeshire," she continued, "and as honourable a name as is to be found among the commoners of England. I should have thought you might have found some lady in your own rank of life worthy of sharing these blessings with you."

"Most probably, aunt, I might : at the same time, I may be allowed to say, that possibly I might have had the ill-luck to hit upon one that might have rendered the greatest

goods of mere fortune and circumstance of no enjoyment to me."

"That would have been an uncommon chance ; but unequal marriages are almost to a certainty productive of discomfort."

"Yes, unequal in age, disposition, principle, or pursuits, I grant you ; but not when they are unequal, merely, in a little money, which I neither require nor wish for——"

"And in connections," said his aunt, "which have more to do with comfort in family intercourse than you have any idea of at present."

"But, dear aunt, Miss Slender is the daughter of a gentleman ?"

"Did you not say that her father was a curate ?"

"I did ; and is not a curate a clergyman ? And is not a clergyman a gentleman, a man of education, and as such fitted to take his place among any other gentlemen or men of education ? Mr. Slender is a gentleman, in the highest sense of the term : he is incapable of a vulgar thought, word, or action : his politeness is that of the heart, and is entwined with his religion. Is not St. Paul's portraiture of a true Christian, in his definition of charity, that of a true gentleman also ? Mr. Slender is that Christian, and that gentleman, and proud and grateful shall I be to call him father."

Clement spoke with an energy that showed Lady Maitland further argument would be useless. The colour deepened on his cheek, and forehead, and his lips trembled with emotion as he added :—

"I know my own dear father, and my dear mother too, would have esteemed and respected Mr. Slender, and would willingly have received his daughter as their own. My conscience is quite at ease, as to what their approbation of my choice would have been."

"That may be : they were excellent people, and, perhaps fortunately for them, without worldly ambition. Yet, my dear nephew, allow me to remind you that you have a sister, an only one : some consideration was due to her."

"A sister ! yes, and one whom I love so sincerely, that if I had wanted any other reason, than my own rational preference for determining my marriage with] my Margaret, I

should have found it in the certainty, that she will be to Julia the most invaluable of friends, the safest of guides, the pattern and example of everything that is desirable in the female sex. You know, my dear aunt, what a subject of anxiety and mortification Julia's early marriage, and the clandestine manner of it, has been to me. You know her yielding, though most sweet and gentle disposition; you know how utterly unformed Orville's character is, how defective his education has been, how thoughtless he is; indeed, he is yet a mere boy in mind and pursuits. Who shall say what he may be in a few years, what he might make my sister, what they both might become, if they had no friendly hand near them to guide them in the path of duty, and prevent their very good qualities from leading them into weakness and folly? That friend I will be to him, and what I am to him my wife will be to his. I could not do Julia a greater service, or confer a greater happiness upon her, than by giving her Margaret Slender for a sister; it is what she herself ardently desires, because she knows the excellence of the whole family."

"I do not doubt their being worthy persons," said Lady Maitland, in the cold tone which great people naturally fall into when they are obliged to acknowledge the vulgar virtues of little ones; "I am sure you could never have brought yourself to associate familiarly with those who were otherwise; but they may have relations less de——"

"Mr. Slender has no relations," interrupted Clement."

"No relations at all!" exclaimed Miss Maitland; "how very odd!"

"Not at all odd, my fair Bertha, in his case. A man who has been eighteen years a curate, on a small stipend, is not likely to know of many relations."

"Eighteen years a curate!" said Miss Maitland, with an actual shudder. "What can the daughter be like."

"What a change for her!" said Georgiana; "she will go out of her wits with joy."

"She does not annex so much importance to mere affluence," said Courtney.

"Nay, now, Clement, you are getting romantic," said Miss Maitland. "What! can you really believe that your fortune has had no influence with the lady?"

"I must plead guilty to the vanity of thinking it has had none at all."

"Well, my dear Clement," said his aunt, "it only shows how ready we all are to believe what we wish. I can only say, if it had no influence at all upon this young person, she is very unlike most of her betters—I beg your pardon, I should have said her sex; and, certainly, another very great disagreeable in unequal connections is that the inferior party is always exposed to the imputation of having been influenced by interested motives."

"In the present case it is impossible."

"And why?"

"Because even at this moment she does not know anything more of my circumstances than that I have a small independency; and for some months after I first became acquainted with her she imagined me to be actually poor."

"Indeed!" said Lady Maitland; "then I suppose you wished to act over again the romance of the silly old Marquis of Exeter—poor foolish man! He went into a village in disguise to look for a marchioness, fell in love with a girl at a washing-tub, married her, and brought her suddenly into all the magnificence of Burleigh House; and the poor creature, who very likely, after all, had more sense than her husband, died of anxiety and fear, in her endeavours to acquire the accomplishments fitting the exalted station to which she found herself so unexpectedly raised."

Poor Clement turned as pale as ashes; the idea that the surprise he was preparing for the beloved of his soul might be injurious to her had never entered his mind. He recollected the portrait at Burleigh House of the lovely marchioness, who had done honour to her exaltation by her virtues, the few short years she was spared to exercise them; he recollected the pensive, almost mournful expression in the countenance. "What," he asked himself, "if he should see the same stealing over his Margaret, her spirits gradually drooping, and her fair form sinking into an early grave?"

Lady Maitland was really a good-natured woman; and now that she had given vent to her spleen in this satirical view of the village girl transformed into a great lady, she strove to disperse the cloud on her nephew's brow, for she

saw that he was actually pained, and she was sorry her shaft had penetrated more than skin-deep, which was all that she intended.

"But, however, my dear Clement, you are your own master, and no one has any right to dictate to you. We will talk the matter over *amicalement*. Still, I think you have been wrong in keeping the young person in ignorance of your actual condition."

"Perhaps," said Miss Maitland, "Clement is like Alcibiades in 'Marmontel's Tales,' determined to be loved for himself alone."

"Certainly, my dear cousin, I would not marry the most beautiful woman in the world, even though she were the richest heiress into the bargain, if I could have a moment's doubt on that point; but it was my desire to keep the sweet confidence between us unfettered, undamped by any sense, on her part, of imaginary inferiority; for the world is unjust enough to annex superiority to money. I also feared her father's nice sense of honour might shrink from allowing the intimacy between us, if he should discover that the suitor of his daughter was in a condition so far above his own."

The ladies looked at one another with an expression which said very plainly, that he, most probably, need not have made himself uneasy on that score.

"Well!" said Lady Maitland, "she is a fortunate young woman; and, no doubt, she will improve after her marriage."

"She has no need of improvement, aunt; it is I that shall improve from her."

"Ah, you are very humble, or she is very perfect; but, however, it is a good thing that she is companionable."

"Is she musical?" asked Georgiana.

"Her voice is," was the reply.

"Does she draw?" inquired Miss Maitland.

"I have seen her draw patterns for embroidery."

"What a droll idea of drawing!" cried Miss Maitland, glancing her eye towards the wall where some of her own really masterly productions, in water-colours, were hung in splendid frames. "I suppose she speaks French?" continued Georgiana.

"I think not."

"Then, of course, she does not understand Italian—that's a pity. What will she do at the Opera?"

"She understands the ancient Italian, that is to say Latin."

"Bless me! how odd!"

"You forget she's a parson's daughter," said Miss Maitland.

"Do not say parson, my dear; it is vulgar," said her mamma.

"I suppose her father taught her."

"Yes, he taught her both Latin and Greek."

"Quite a blue," said Miss Maitland, a little disdainfully; "but such things are out of fashion now. Authoresses, and poetesses, and lady astronomers, and lady chemists are all gone by. Can she dance the polka?"

"Certainly not," said Clement.

"I suppose, however, she can dance," said Georgiana.

"I do not know; I have never seen her."

"But of course she has learned."

"I believe not."

"Not! not learned to dance! really that is shocking! Why, what will she do when she goes to balls?"

"She will sit still, I imagine," said Clement laughing.

"Well, but really it is no laughing matter, Clement," said his aunt. "The fact is, you must take her to Paris as soon as you are married, and let her have lessons from Papillon; he will teach her to come into a room divinely."

"But I do not intend to go to Paris when I am married."

"Why not?—you must go somewhere."

"I shall go somewhere—I shall go to a very old-fashioned place."

"What? do you mean the Hague?"

"No, to a place much more old-fashioned than that."

"Surely you do not mean Bath?"

"No, my dear aunt, I mean a place more old-fashioned still than any you would ever think of; in short, you would not guess if I gave you a twelvemonth to do it in. I mean to go *home*."

"Home!" repeated the young ladies in the same breath.

"Home! what a singular idea!"

"I suppose I am a singular person," said Clement, "for to me the idea seems most natural and fitting. Where can a bride look so beautiful as in her own home? I should be jealous of any other having her first smiles. I had rather

see her waited upon by my own faithful and respectful servants, than by a set of capering mercenaries at an hotel; in short, I had rather that her first impressions and dearest recollections should be associated with the seat of my ancestors and the haunts of my own youth, than with foreign palaces, and places that perhaps we should never wish to see again."

"But do not you think," said Miss Maitland, affecting to suppress a yawn, "that it will be dreadful dull for you both? I should be so afraid, in such a case, of my husband getting tired of me."

"That would argue an impossibility of taste in him," said Clement, with that little air of male coquetry which so well became him; "but if a man were barbarian enough to be capable of such a sentiment, you may depend upon it he would be more likely to indulge it in the *enmas* of a steam-boat, or cooped up day after day in a travelling-carriage side by side with his fair partner, than amid the healthful duties and social pleasures of his own neighbourhood. For my part, I shall reserve my travels till home has, at any rate, lost a little of its novelty."

"Well," said Lady Maitland kindly, "yours always was a happy home in the time of your dear father and mother, and you will have my best wishes that it may be equally so to yourself and the young person you have chosen to share it with you."

"Do not call her the young person, my dear aunt, but the young lady," said Clement in a tone betwixt remonstrance and entreaty. "She is a lady by nature, as you will acknowledge when you see her, which I hope will be soon and often, and for a long time together; for in every place that I may call a home, my aunt and cousins will always be my dearest and most welcome guests."

It was impossible to resist the affectionate warmth with which he spoke, sealing his words all round with the kiss of peace, which had a mighty harmonizing effect upon the remainder of the conversation.

Clement felt his mind greatly relieved when he had taken leave of his aunt and cousins, and found himself fairly on the road again to Creykedale. No sooner, however, was the door closed after him than the whole trio began to wonder at his folly, and lament his fate.

"I call it a most melancholy thing," said Miss Maitland, "for a young man like him to throw himself away so. I should think he has ten or twelve thousand a year, at least ; should not you, mamma ?"

"Why, my dear, in all estimates of property I invariably give credit to the lowest ; but I believe his clear rent-roll exceeds eight, and then he has a great deal of money in the funds and other securities, for Mr. Courtney was a very prudent man, and he himself can have spent but little since his father's death."

"Well, it is a sad thing," said Georgiana. "I think there ought to be a law to prevent such improper matches. Besides, I think it is very indelicate to make such a fuss about marrying for love."

"And as to that," said Miss Maitland, "he might surely have found somebody of his own rank in society, or even higher—for after all, he is only a commoner—to be in love with him, as well as this dowdy parson's daughter."

"Do not use the term parson," said Lady Maitland ; "clergyman's daughter, if you please. Remember, she will be your cousin, perhaps, before the month be out."

"There was Lady Willoughby dying for him at Florence," said Georgiana. "And Miss Fortescue, who had been engaged five years to a general officer in India, told him, after she had only danced with him twice, that she thought long engagements never terminated happily, and she should like so much to marry in England, and live in the country."

"And that foolish Countess Spendall," said Miss Maitland, "who has only seven hundred a year jointure, told him that women of rank might do very well without title in a husband ; but that it was a great distinction to a young man, a commoner, to have a titled wife,—it was more than a fortune."

"Yes, yes, my dears," interrupted Lady Maitland, "he, like every other young man of fortune, has had plenty of advances made him ; that is the worst of it, for he has seen through them, and they have disgusted him with what he calls women of the world. It is the fault of the women ; they have only themselves to thank for it. They should not let the men see so plainly what they are aiming at. To be desirous of making a good and suitable match is natural,

and, indeed, praiseworthy ; but to betray anxiety about is the worst possible method to succeed. Always have your eyes about you ; but do not let anybody find out on whom they rest."

"I wonder you did not try to dissuade Clement from such a discreditable match, mamma," said Miss Maitland almost peevishly.

"And what would have been the good of it, my dear ? I never gave a piece of disinterested advice but once in my life and then I lost my oldest and dearest friend by it ; so I resolved never after to give any other than what might coincide with the plans and wishes of the person who asked it ; no other is ever desired or ever acted upon. But, however, now that the thing is settled, we must look on the bright side. I intend to be very kind to my new niece, and you girls had better be the same. If she be really of a good disposition, she will be grateful for it ; the world will commend us, and we shall always have a pleasant place to go to, and sometime perhaps, may be spared the trouble of a house in town for the season, which will be very convenient after an expensive *sojourn* on the Continent. And, above all, do not let people take it into their heads that you are either of you vexed or disappointed about your cousin's marriage, which they would be sure to think if they saw you treat his wife with coolness."

"They would be very much mistaken then," said Miss Maitland, with a somewhat suspicious toss of her head. "I should never think of marrying a cousin, and I should hate to marry a man younger than myself."

Miss Maitland had a forlorn hope of making a final conquest of a superannuated duke, who had danced about her for the last two years.

"It is not a trifling difference of age, either on one side or the other, that can be of any importance, if a match be suitable in other respects," said Georgiana, who was just then the object of particular attention to an earl yet in his minority ; "but certainly a cousin is the last person I should ever think of."

"And I am sure, my dears, I do not care how long you remain unmarried, if you can but make yourselves happy with me."

And with these assertions, all of equal sincerity, and all equally well understood, the ladies separated to dress for dinner, Lady Maitland throwing out a consolatory hint that most likely the duke or the earl, or both, might look in upon them in the course of the evening.

The fact was, that Lady Maitland was, as we have already said, a woman of the world, and had made her daughters like herself. She manœuvred for them as assiduously as Mrs. Pluffy did for hers; but it was in a quiet and lady-like manner, not so easily found out. She was, moreover, by constitution a good-tempered person. She rarely wounded the self-love of others; never said an unpolite thing, because she held it to be "bad taste;" never an ill-natured one, because she knew it to be "bad policy." It was a golden maxim with her, that "one never repents holding one's tongue," and an admirable maxim it was in itself, whatever might be the principle on which, with her ladyship, it was founded; so she was universally pronounced "a charming woman." And certain it is, that if the generality of those who move in the circle which is exclusively termed "the great world," imitated her example, though it might still be a very worldly affair, it would yet be safer and more agreeable to live in than it is at present.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS.

ALL this time matters were moving on very indifferently at the Rectory. The doctor's creditors besieged his gate, stimulated in their applications by the report that one of his daughters had married a player, which did not appear to them an event likely so far to add to his resources as to enable him to pay his debts; each, therefore, sought to prefer the earliest application, on the old principle, "first come, first served." The son and heir kept himself out of the way of difficulties which he had no power of alleviating, and remonstrances which came too late. Miss Pluffy looked awfully sulky; she at once despised her sister's choice, and envied her the attainment of her wishes. She

had attempted to sneer at the fulfilment, by opposites, of her mamma's anticipations of a titled son-in-law, but Mrs. Plufly had a certain sort of dignity of her own when goaded on to the manifestation of it; and she never felt herself so determined to maintain that she had been in the right, as when she began to entertain strong suspicions that she had been in the wrong. She, therefore, at once met her eldest daughter's amiable endeavours to put her out of love with the termination of her politics, by a rebuff as magisterial as any that the doctor himself could have given.

"I think, Augusta, it would be more respectful to your papa and me, and more affectionate to your sister, if you were to wait, and see how her choice turns out before you criticise it in such an uncharitable spirit—a spirit not at all becoming in a clergyman's daughter, and particularly in a High Church clergyman like your father, Doctor Plufly. I only wish you may never have anything to repent of when you come to make your own election, if ever you should have any to make."

This was "the unkindest cut of all," and Mrs. Plufly could not help, Parthian-like, looking back upon the arrow she had winged in her flight, as she took refuge in her store-room from the indignant toss of Miss Plufly's head, which plainly bespoke all that she would have replied, had she dared.

In the course of a few days the solemn and anxious dullness of the breakfast-table at the Rectory was, in some degree, relieved by a letter, in Emily's handwriting, being brought in on one plate, as a sort of pendant to a hot muffin on another.

"Well, I declare!" said Mrs. Plufly, "it is from Emily, at last. Well, to be sure, poor thing! I shall be glad to hear what she has got to say," and all the mother rushed into her eyes. "I hope, doctor, my dear, you have no objection," as she took out her scissors to cut round a seal, the device of which was a mountebank vaulting on a tight-rope, surrounded, by way of motto, with

'All the world's a stage,'"

"Never mind me, my dear, if it gives you anything like satisfaction," the doctor answered with an edifying air of

resignation, and helping himself to the muffin. Miss Pluffy meanwhile scornfully scrutinized the envelope. "What a seal!" she exclaimed, throwing it upon the table, as if it burnt her fingers. "I wonder Emily was not ashamed to use such a thing, instead of a gentlemanly coat of arms, or a crest, or a handsome antique, or even a simple cipher."

"Well, my dear, never mind the seal," said her mamma, "most likely, poor thing, it was the first she laid her hand on, so let us hear what she says." And so, putting on her spectacles, which she only mounted on special occasions, and in strictly private circles, Mrs. Pluffy began the following epistle aloud, *pro bono publico*, and we shall follow her example, for the benefit of our readers, giving them, moreover, the advantage of the comments with which the reading was relieved from time to time.

"ANGEL HILL, BURY ST. EDMUNDS.

"My ever-honoured Papa and Mamma,—I write to you upon my bended knees [Miss Clarissa Harlowe was Emily's favourite heroine, and she always, as everybody knows that has read that immortal work, wrote to her 'honoured parents' upon her bended knees], to inform you that I am the happiest of women, and to implore your pity and forgiveness. My Shirley is the noblest, as well as the most captivating, of men; none can know his hidden merits so thoroughly as I do. ['Poor silly girl!' exclaimed the doctor. 'Well, my dear, it is better that she should think so now, poor thing!'] said Mrs. Pluffy in a deprecating tone; 'and after all, he may have more in him than we fancy.'] He is indeed a man, that

'Take him all in all,
We shall not look upon his like again.'

['I hope I shall not, at any rate,' groaned the doctor.]

"Daily and hourly do I feel myself expand in his society. ['Humph!' said the doctor.] You must come and witness our felicity. We have such a sweet place! to be sure, it is over a chandler's shop ['Very sweet, indeed!'] said Miss Pluffy, turning up her nose, as if she was inhaling the odour of the tallow-tub on a melting day], but my Shirley is above prejudices ['And above the shop also, I suppose, by two pair of stairs,' observed the doctor]; moreover, there is a private door, and our back windows look into the Abbey grounds, and over the botanic gardens, where, as I lift my eyes from my paper, I now see the tall figure of the curator, tracking his pensive way among the ruins of antiquity, and the sweets of his own classification, with one infant blossom in each hand, and half a dozen olive-branches at his heels. ['Poor Emmy,' said Mrs. Pluffy, twinkling away a tear; 'she always had such a pretty turn for description.' 'For my part,' said Miss Pluffy, 'I never had the art of making a great deal out of nothing at all.'

Her mamma resumed the letter.] We boast no luxuries, dear papa and mamma, but we can always give you

‘A scrip with herbs and fruit supplied,
And water from the spring.’

[‘The girl is gone mad! stark, staring mad!’ exclaimed the doctor, throwing himself back in his great chair with a sort of hydrophobic shudder. ‘Let me go on, doctor,’ said Mrs. Pluffy in a beseeching tone.] The rump steaks and veal cutlets are also excellent here, and we are just opposite the butcher [‘There is some sense in that,’ the doctor muttered]; and moreover, we have in the house, at this very time, a brace of pheasants, a hare, a turkey, and a hamper of port I do not know how many years old, and some Madeira that has crossed the line, they say, though I do not know what that means [The doctor pricked up his ears: ‘Ay, now she expresses herself like a sensible young woman’], but is reckoned all the better for it, sent to us by my Shirley’s venerable and revered parents, from their Eden of an abode in Maltravers Park. [‘Good sort of people, I dare say, in their way,’ said the doctor. ‘Yes, indeed, that we may be very sure of,’ said Mrs. Pluffy. She proceeded with the letter.] They write us word that they yearn to embrace us, and I long to throw myself into their arms: but my Shirley has pledged himself to get up a bespeak for a charity [‘More fool he,’ growled the doctor, ‘he had better see which side his own bread is buttered upon’], and

‘His words are bonds,
His oaths are oracles.’

He has written a melodrama expressly for the occasion, and I am to play the principal female part, for the manager says nothing draws so well as a young lady, at her first appearance on any stage. [‘A pretty way, truly,’ groaned the doctor, ‘of keeping up my respectability, just now.’] I shall have the happiness of repeating my Shirley’s poetry, of being clasped in his arms in the last act, and dying by his hand, after I have gone distracted. There is to be a new green baize, on purpose, as I shall be in white satin, like the Bride of Abydos. [The doctor groaned again, but the pheasants, the hare, the turkey, the old port, and the Madeira twice crossing the line, swam before his eyes, and chased away the mirage of his distracted and dying daughter, stretched on the new green baize in white satin. ‘How ridiculous,’ said Miss Pluffy, ‘for her to put herself to the expense of a white satin dress, she can never want again anything of the kind to visit in.’ ‘We don’t know that, my dear,’ said her mamma; ‘and, at any rate, for such an occasion, the charity ought to pay for it: but let me go on.’] We were at church twice last Sunday. My Shirley likes to keep up the moral and religious respectability of the profession, and I was resolved to show the people that I was the daughter of an eminent and orthodox divine, who ought, as I have heard ever since I can remember anything, to have been in lawn sleeves long before now. [‘I wish she would stay at home,’ said the doctor.] I thought it very unhandsome in Doctor Give-it-em-well to thunder out a philippic against the

players, as he did, with me sitting just opposite to him ; but our land-lady says he does so every year, as soon as ever they put a foot into the town. I took care, however, to draw myself up, and look as haughty as I could, in going out of the pew, to show him that I did not care one straw for a word he had said ; but my Shirley only laughed—he is such a lamb of a temper, dear mamma—and said,

‘ Let the gall’d jade wince,
Our withers are unwrung.’

And the next day he sent him a bill of the play, for he is one of the ‘chosen few,’ who delight to return good for evil.

“ And now, my dear papa and mamma, I must make my exit, for it is just upon post-time. My Shirley joins me in duty to you, and love to Augusta, wishing her as happy as we are [‘Much obliged to them,’ said Augusta, with a toss of her head], and to Augustus, who we hope will come to the Bespeak, as we can give him a spare bed in the attic where the cheeses are kept ; and begging you, dear mamma, to water my balsams, and look after my poor cottagers, particularly Betty Blacksmith and the little lame boy at the gate, and my precious one-eyed kitten [‘What a good heart she has!’ Mrs. Pluffy exclaimed in a half-crying tone], I am, ever dear papa and mamma, your dutiful and penitent, though happy daughter,

“ EMILY ELEANORA SHIRLEY.

“ P.S. Old Mr. Shirley has promised to settle seven hundred a year, with remainder, as he calls it, to me, upon his son, as soon as he leaves the stage, though he will not give him a halfpenny while he is on it ; but what can such trifles add to our felicity, or to our worth in each other’s eyes ? ”

“ Humph ! ” said the doctor, in a considerably softened tone, as Mrs. Pluffy folded up her daughter’s epistle, “ Emily is like the rest of your sex my dear ; she leaves all the real sense and substance of her letter for her postscript. You may depend upon it, these Shirleys are good, sensible, respectable people—and rich too, depend upon that. I make no doubt they have their forty or fifty thousand pounds snug : indeed, that is nothing for a clever steward. I remember old Touch’emup, who, as the people say, ‘went shares’ with the Duke of Tumbledown, died worth a hundred thousand—but, however, that is neither here nor there. I am a Christian minister, and it is my duty to forgive. The young man, too, has no doubt interest with that harum-scarum Lord Orville, who must have considerable church property in his gift, now that he is Earl of Maltravers : so I would have you go over to Bury St. Edmund’s to-morrow morning, my dear, just by yourself, in a quiet way, and tell

them that we shall be glad to see them for a few days—it will look better in the eyes of the world. And you might as well bring the hare, and the pheasants away with you, if Emmy should press you to take them, which she very likely will, for she was always a good girl in the main—but pray, my dear, do take that absurd notion out of her head, of going upon the stage; it would just now give the quietus to any faint hopes of preferment that may still linger with me in my adversity.”

“Ah, Doctor Pluffy,” exclaimed his admiring wife, as he concluded his speech in a tone of dignified sorrow, “if everybody had but their deserts in this world! but, however, a resigned and humble spirit is better than the deceitfulness of riches. Yes, I will go to-morrow morning; she will be delighted to see me, poor dear! And as for the hare and the pheasants, it will, perhaps, be better to tell her at once that I will take them, for it would only be a trouble to the mistress of the house to have to dress them.”

“And most likely she would spoil them,” added the doctor. “And persuade the young fellow, if you possibly can, to go home to his father. What a blockhead he must be, with a good seven hundred a year waiting for him, to lose his time in ranting about and making a fool of himself.”

Mrs. Pluffy promised to set the matter in a right light to him; and having thus settled the affair, she bustled off, to make calls and tell all her neighbours that she was expecting her *married daughter*, in a few days, at the Rectory—for she always now, in speaking of Emily, gave her this distinguishing appellation, much to the secret displeasure of the unmarried one.

CHAPTER XLIX.

WAYS AND MEANS.

GREAT was the perplexity how to get Mrs. Pluffy conveyed to Bury St. Edmund's, without compromising the Pluffy dignity. If she went in her own carriage, she would be ashamed for her coachman to see that her daughter was lodging at a tallow-chandler's; if she availed herself of the Phenomena, so called in compliment to its proprietress,

which passed through Gormanton, regularly at noon, on its way from Norwich by Bury, to the "Bull" in Whitechapel, she would be ashamed of her neighbours seeing her get into so vulgar a conveyance ; besides, they would all find out where she was going to, and what she was going for, and of course would talk about nothing else. Such is the inconvenience of being of too much consequence, even if it be only in one's own opinion.

It was at length agreed that the doctor should take her in the carriage as far as H——, five miles from Gormanton, through which place the Yarmouth coach passed, on its way to the metropolis, stopping to dine at Bury ; then to leave her at the inn where the said coach stopped to change horses, and to return for her to the same spot, in the evening, by the time she might be safely deposited there by the "down coach." By this manœuvre, they hoped to elude the observation of their neighbours, and to put their own servants upon a wrong scent ; accordingly, Mrs. Plufly found herself, at ten o'clock in the morning, quietly seated in the Yarmouth coach, with some very respectable-looking fellow-passengers, and herself greatly divided between the desire of making them understand what superior company they were favoured with in her person, and the wisdom of keeping herself incog. Prudence, however, prevailed, and when she was set down at the "Angel" at Bury St. Edmunds, she found she might walk round the town, in search of the chandler's shop, without the smallest danger of being recognised. She was not long in finding it ; its proximity to the Abbey grounds was sufficient guide to her, and arrived at the "private door," she knocked with a rap more proportioned to the appearance of the place than to her accustomed ideas of her own dignity : it was answered by a slipshod servant girl, with a very dirty gauze cap, at the back of her head, and a very dirty apron, and with a baby in a very dirty frock in her arms.

"Is my daugh—, is Mrs. Shirley at home?" poor Mrs. Plufly gasped out.

"Yes, ma'am, please to walk upstairs," said the girl ; stepping backwards towards the narrow staircase, with her eyes wide open, in respect at Mrs. Plufly's satin pelisse and handsome shawl.

"You need not come upstairs," said Mrs. Pluffy; "Mr Shirley expects me."

"Second floor, ma'am, if you please."

"I know," said Mrs. Pluffy. The girl descended into the cellar-kitchen, Mrs. Pluffy ascended to the second floor; arrived there, she stopped to fetch her breath—the staircase was steeper and more circuitous than she had been accustomed to, and her heart had beaten more rapidly in climbing it than was its wonted rate. The door of the sitting-room was opposite to her—outside stood an empty coal-scuttle, and in it a candlestick and a morsel of tallow candle, which, from its begrimed condition, showed that it had been made useful in lighting the fire. On the left hand was the door of a bed-room half open; Mrs. Pluffy glanced her eye into the interior; a straw bonnet, familiar to her sight, suspended from a peg in the wall, and keeping amicable company with a somewhat eccentric-looking hat resting on a peg by its side, and sundry garments, masculine and feminine, thrown about "in most admired disorder," seemed to assure her that she was gazing on the sleeping sanctuary of Mr. and Mrs. Shirley. She heard Emily's voice, and her maternal feelings all excited by the sound, she sat down for an instant on a chair near the bedside to compose herself. Again Emily spoke, but she seemed to be weeping, and Mrs. Pluffy was dismayed to hear her exclaim—"Think of my father's venerable years,—the silvery hair time-planted on his brow."

"What does the poor girl mean?" she thought; "her father has not a silvery hair about him, and as for his years, though he is always venerable, he is young enough to do honour to lawn-sleeves for forty years to come, if he could only get them."

This soliloquy passed through Mrs. Pluffy's mind in less than one-tenth part of the time it has taken me to write it short as it is; but before it was concluded, consternation was added to her amazement by hearing the table struck with a vehemence which made everything upon it ring again, and a masculine voice thunder out,—

"Cursed be his grey iniquity—this night
He dies!"

"Oh, you villain!" shrieked Mrs. Pluffy, rushing into the

room, where her daughter was sitting on her husband's knee, with the manuscript of the melodrama in her hand, "what do you mean by making a daughter of Doctor Pluffy's cry, and threatening to murder her honoured father? but the doctor shall put you into the Spiritual Court; he shall, you—you good for——" And here Mrs. Pluffy was going to cry, in good earnest, but Emily, starting up, ran to her, kissed her two or three times affectionately, and exclaimed, "Oh, my dear, dear mamma! how glad I am to see you! How kind it is in you to come! We were rehearsing my Shirley's melodrama 'The Generous Assassin.' It is so affecting; but did you really think we meant dear papa? Poor mamma! she is all in a tremble. Sit down, dear mamma."

Shirley, who had stood gazing on his mamma-in-law, with evident delight, now sprang forward to take her hand. "I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I really was lost in admiration! Emily, my life, my love, eject those three kittens and their mother out of the arm-chair, and I will wheel it round to the fire for your mamma."

"You are very polite, sir," said Mrs. Pluffy, who was now the colour of a full-blown peony, "but I had rather sit away from the fire."

"Well, then, near the breakfast-table; be it so. Clear away the egg-shells, my precious Emily, and ring the bell. Our Hebe can get your mamma some hot coffee in a minute."

"Not any for me," said Mrs. Pluffy; "I have breakfasted hours ago."

"Then, ma'am, you must be ready for lunch; we will have some directly. What can we give your mamma, my treasure?"

"Oh, a veal cutlet, if mamma likes it—or—"

"Or some sausages. The Bury sausages, madam, are the very best things in the world; they are incomparable. If that Chinese emperor that set his villages on fire in order to have roast pig had once tasted the Bury sausages, he would never have done so again. Emily and I eat them twice a day; our landlady sells them in the shop below, which is exceedingly convenient."

"I am in no hurry for anything at all," said Mrs. Pluffy, who, although somewhat shocked at the open mention of the

shop, yet could not but be pleased with the gay good humour and frank hospitality of her son-in-law. "I came to have a little friendly chat with dear Emmy and you, and I will take whatever you have got, without ceremony, when you sit down to dinner." So Mrs. Pluffy drew her chair a little nearer to the fire, and Emily sat beside her, holding her hand, and Shirley took a seat opposite to her.

"Really, madam," said he, "you must give me leave to say that you are a very effective woman."

Mrs. Pluffy was puzzled to know what he meant. She saw he intended something complimentary. She had been told, in her youth, that she was handsome, and since her marriage with Doctor Pluffy she had always been reckoned among her humbler neighbours, "quite a lady;" but as to being an *effective* person, she had yet to learn what it was.

"Do you not think, my love, your mamma would look vastly well by lamplight?" Mrs. Pluffy bridled up a little. The idea was not flattering. "Do you think, madam, you could just do that over again?"

"Do what over again, sir? I do not know what you mean."

"That delicious little bit—the entrance scene—it was admirable! I assure you it gave me quite an idea—the rush in—the extended hands. Do you not think, my dear life, we could get a cast for your mamma?"

"A cast, sir," said Mrs. Pluffy, indignantly, "pray do not trouble yourself on my account; the carriage is to meet me at H——, and I can take a post-chaise directly if you——"

"Dear mamma," said Emily, "my Shirley means a cast of parts."

"Yes, nothing else," said Shirley, "and that, in a private way, of course; private theatricals are all the go just now. 'Queen Constance,' 'Andromache,' 'Lady Randolph'—something of that sort, with a touch of the mother in it. And then, look Emily, what a very handsome foot and ankle your mamma has got. Mrs. Heavysides, our first woman, would give half a year's salary for it; she is so fond of showing herself off in sentimentals."

Mrs. Pluffy thought her son-in-law must have very good natural sense at the bottom, though he was such a rattle-cap.

But, however, she put on an air of dignity, and said, "Private theatricals, I know, are very genteel, and all very well; indeed, Lord Dunderhead, who has an uncle a bishop, the Honourable and Reverend Lord Augustus Dunderhead, has them always at Dunderhead Hall, at Christmas, and I believe the bishop has played in them himself before he was a bishop; but public theatricals are quite another matter, and Doctor Pluffy does hope, now that you are a married man, Mr. Shirley, you will give up the profession altogether, and so do I; and so, I am sure, must your worthy father and mother, who are, no doubt, most excellent people."

"They are very good old souls," said Shirley, "and would very gladly see me exchange the stage for the pulpit."

"Ah, that would be a delightful thing" said Mrs. Pluffy, brightening at the idea of the living of eight hundred a-year waiting his acceptance; the church is such a gentlemanly thing—and indeed, in the present day, gentlemen are greatly wanted in it—as the doctor very rightly says, there are so many sad dissensions and parties in it, and such low people trying to get the upper hand in it. I dare say your father would buy you a nice living."

"Oh, as for that, I could have one of fourteen hundred a year, for holding up my finger,"—Mrs. Pluffy involuntarily held up hers—"if I was properly ordained, Maltravers would manage that for me."

"Bless me! what a pity it is that you are not—perhaps the doctor could hold it for you till you were. I am sure he would gladly do it, to serve you. And you would look so well in the pulpit, wouldn't he, Emily?"

"He would look well anywhere," said the admiring Emily.

"Pulpits are ugly things, though," said Shirley; "they always remind me of Orator Henley in his tub,

" 'Tuning his voice, and balancing his hands' "—

and here he suited his action to the words. "A rostrum, such as the Italian preachers use, is what I should like; where there is room for action—declamation is nothing without action. Action, action, action, said Demosthenes. I should like preaching well enough, then, and I should be in earnest, too—that's the grand secret; as Henderson said,

when he was asked by a certain bishop why people were more affected at the theatre than at church—"We players are in earnest." It does not do, though, not to be in earnest in the church—awkward to be out in one's part there—no rehearsing, no prompter, no apology-making when the curtain falls. And I should like marrying the dear, blushing, trembling little creatures very well, when they were young and handsome, and baptising the infant innocents, when they were pretty, and had pretty nurses; but I should not at all like burying the dead, or trying to convert the sinner; too much of a sinner myself, yet, I am afraid. No, it wouldn't do. I have my own notions on that matter. I had rather be a stage-sweeper, a scene-shifter, all my life, than undertake the holy office of a minister of the gospel from any secondary motive whatsoever. But, however—fair words butter no parsnips, as Sancho says—so I will go and order dinner. By the bye, what a fine fellow that Sancho is. I played him once—Sancho in 'Barataria,' for the benefit of the manager; I thought the house would have gone into fits"—then altering his voice to the deep tone of tragedy, he waved his hand, saying, "Well, 'Farewell a while, I will not leave you long;' that's Lady Randolph, madam. Emily, my enchantress, we must get up something for your mamma, quite snug—she shall be Lady Randolph, and I will be Norval. You remember Norval, that day, at the blacksmith's! How I laughed; lucky day for me, ma'am—first time I saw your daughter."

And away he went, singing all the way down stairs,

"Begone, dull Care, I prithee begone from me,
Begone, dull Care, you and I shall never agree."

"Is he not delightful, mamma?" said the enraptured Emily. He is always so—always so lively, so good-tempered, and so kind! he is an angel."

"My dear Emmy, you are an amiable creature yourself and always was," replied her mamma, kissing her, "and a man must be a brute indeed that could behave otherwise than kindly to you. I am glad you are happy together, and I hope that, altogether, the match will turn out better than it seemed likely to do at first."

"I am as happy as a queen!" exclaimed Emily.

"Well, my dear, so much the better for you. Your papa will be delighted to hear it. He is such a man, your papa! Emily; so forgiving! he is 'willing to overlook all that is past, and I come on purpose to tell you so, and to invite you and your husband to come to the Rectory next week, to stay a few days, in order that our neighbours may see that we are all friends; which will give your husband a great deal of respectability in the eyes of the world."

"My Shirley does not care for the world," said Emily, growing sentimental. "Nor do I."

—— " 'What is the world to us,
Its pomp, its pleasures, and its nonsense all,
Who in each other clasp——'"

"Well, my dear, I am glad you are happy," interrupted her mamma.

"But it is very kind in dear papa, and in you, too, dear mamma," continued Emily, "to come on purpose to invite us; and I am sure my Shirley will think so—he has such a grateful heart! But I am afraid we shall not be able to come till the end of the season, for he plays almost every night—tragedy, comedy, farce, pantomime—all are alike to him. He is the life of the company."

"Ah! my dear, that is the worst of the whole business! To think that Doctor Pluffy's daughter should have married a player! Now if one of the Slenders had done so, it would have been nothing in comparison, their father being only a curate; but for the rector of Gormanton to have a daughter the wife of a player!—there's something dreadful in it. You must persuade your husband, Emily, to leave the stage and go into the church."

"Oh, mamma!"

"And why not, my dear? Where is there a profession more honourable or more comfortable? And with the possibility, too, of a living of fourteen hundred a year! Why, he might sit down at table with the first lords in the land!"

"That he might do now, with many of them, mamma; but he has no taste for lords or fine company, or anything formal, and I am afraid he would find the church very dull."

"But why should he, my dear? Does your papa find dull? Doesn't he go about his garden, and his hot-house and visit, and enjoy his rubber, and spend his time just as other gentlemen would do? He does not, indeed, go out with the hounds now, because he heard the bishop, who is rather narrow-minded, though a good sort of man enough in his way, does not approve such things in clergymen; and besides, he is getting too heavy for horseback; but when he was a young man, he hunted, and shot, and fished, and boated, like anybody else; and your husband might do the same, if he did it in a gentlemanly way, and kept up his dignity, as your papa does, and did not associate with low people—it is that that brings the church into disrepute."

"But my Shirley has very particular ideas on that subject, dear mamma," said Emily, with more gravity than was her wont; "he can make very serious reflections sometimes. I think he may possibly retire from the theatrical profession at the end of this season, to please his parents; but I am almost certain nothing would induce him to enter the church, unless he became quite a serious character, which is not very likely."

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Pluffy,—suddenly thinking that if he would not qualify himself for the fourteen hundred a year, Doctor Pluffy, who was ready qualified for it every way, in her opinion, might get it instead of him—"that is as God pleases. Perhaps, after all, he may be better out of the church than in, and may do as much good. We all have our vocation, as the apostle, I forget which, says. But as the stage, it cannot be called a vocation at all, for, after all, it is nothing but a make-believe, and I shall be heartily glad when he has done with it; and you, dear Emmy, I fervently hope, will never so far forget what you owe to the name Pluffy, as to appear upon the stage in any way whatever. I think your poor papa and mamma have a right to ask the small consideration from you."

"My duty now is to obey my husband," returned Miss Shirley, with an air of dignity. "His honour is pledged to my appearance in his melodrama, but I shall not compromise the name of Pluffy by so doing, as I shall come before the public without any name at all; simply as a young lady's first appearance on any stage."

"Heaven grant it may be the last!" Mrs. Pluffy inwardly ejaculated; but a conviction that it was very desirable to cultivate a good understanding with her son-in-law restrained her from making any remarks to her daughter that might be disagreeable to him, if repeated, which she knew they were pretty certain to be. She therefore was beginning a conciliatory speech, when the door opened, and in came Shirley, followed by a deputy from the "Angel," with a tin case on his head, and the dirty-aproned Hebe, with the dirty-frocked baby still on one arm, and under the other a dirty table-cloth, with sundry knives and spoons, that showed, by their complexion, she had not much time to give to the surface of things.

Emily could not help colouring at the slovenly set-out; but Shirley

"The rising blush espied,"

and instantly guessing its cause, disappeared again, and running into the shop, made such a forcible appeal to the feelings of his landlady, that not only were her keys produced to get out one of the best table-cloths, and the best spoons, and knives and forks, and glasses—those, in short, that she used herself on Sunday—but she actually took the baby, and propped it up between two firkins of butter on the counter, and, by rocking, allowed the Hebe time to wash her hands and face, and first turn her apron, and then, finally, resolve on changing it for a clean one, and her gauze cap for a clean muslin one, by which operations her own appearance was as much improved, as was that of the table by the substitution of the "best" plate and linen for that with which the landlady favoured the "lodgers" in a general way.

The dinner was then produced, and a very pretty specimen it afforded of what the "Angel" could do at a moment's notice,—a small tureen of excellent gravy soup, a pair of fried soles, a boiled chicken, to which the far-famed sausages served as accompaniment, a delicate little leg of lamb, with a fresh salad, and a dish of early peas, formed the bill of fare—to which was added from the Shirley store some choice potted game and a variety of delicious preserves and dried fruits—with port and madeira, that boasted the same age and quality as that which stocked the cellars of the Earl of

Maltravers. It really looked very inviting. Mrs. Pluffy argued within herself that a young man who could order a dinner in such perfect good taste must be a gentleman in the main. "How very nice," she kept repeating, "how very nice; how I wish your papa had been with us! he would so have enjoyed himself—he has such a good heart—nothing he likes better than a little snug family dinner like this. I'm sure he will be as fond of your husband, my dear, as if he were his own son."

"We will drink his health, my dear madam," said Shirley, "and speedily may the time arrive when I shall hear him say,—

"‘Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York.’"

I was in the York company, so that does very well."

"Yes, I wish papa was here," said Emily; "but I will tell you what you shall do, mamma. We have got plenty of game in the house, and I ought to have had some of it dressed for you to-day, but I thought it would make us so late; though, indeed, to confess the truth, I believe the pleasure of seeing you put everything else out of my head—so you *must* take some back with you, dear mamma, and give it to papa, with his poor Emily's love."

"Well proposed, my darling treasure, said Shirley; "I can get a little hamper for it—there are plenty that the Yarmouth bloaters came in, in the shop, and capital things they are for a relish. I often serve them out myself on a Saturday night. I like to take a hand in the business—it is fine fun to dole out the two pennyworths of cheese and three pennyworths of bacon to the old women, and the penn'orths of baccy to the old men—they like to come to me, for I take care they shall have good weight. And then what capital studies among them! You know, ma'am, we must catch the living manners as they rise—but Emily is all for the sentimental; if she succeeds in my melodrama, I shall try her in 'Belvidera.'"

Here, happily, the church clock struck, and Mrs. Pluffy found that she should be only just in time for the coach—so she retired with Emily to put on her cloak; and Shirley, cramming the hamper with every good thing they had in the house, soon got it tied down and consigned to the care

of the Hebe, who was literally a maid of all work, to take to the coach. He then volunteered his arm to his mamma-in-law, who, after taking a tender leave of her daughter, and reiterating her invitation of them both to the Rectory, set off with him to the "Angel," and arrived there precisely as the coachee had given the decisive "Now, gentlemen, if you please;" and as the hint extended equally to the lady passengers, Mrs. Pluffy exhibited once more her really handsome foot and ankle, on the step, to the admiring glance of her son-in-law, returned his good-humoured smile and cordial shake of the hand, and proceeded on her homeward journey, so well satisfied altogether with her visit, that she felt for the moment as if she really should not care if all the world knew that her "married daughter" was lodging at a chandler's shop.

CHAPTER L.

POETICAL READINGS AND PROSE EXHORTATIONS.

FROM the day that Clement Courtney had declared to Lady Maitland and his cousins his intention of marrying Margaret Slender, his mind had been completely at ease. He had nothing more to do with the opinions or restraints of society. With him, as with Rousseau's "St. Preux," the world seemed divided only into two parts—"that where she was, and that where she was not." To him

"The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine;
Her chamber-window did surpass in glory
The portals of the dawn—all Paradise
Could, by the simple opening of a door,
Let itself in upon him—pathways, walks,
Swarmed with enchantment."

Sometimes Margaret would take the baby in her arms, and go across the moor to meet him. How sweet it was to him to see the blush of delight that warmed her fair cheek as he drew near! the light that beamed from beneath the lids of her dove-like eyes! the refulgence that glowed in them

when she took courage, for a moment, to raise them to his and again cast them down to escape the enamoured gaze that sought them with an ardour that defeated its own purpose ! To hear her sweet voice tremble as she welcomed him ; to mark the slight quiver of her lip as his approached it ; to feel the delicate pressure of her hand—so delicate that it would scarcely have ruffled the silken plumage of a moth's wing—yet he felt it, yea, through every fibre of his frame ! And then, how still more sweet, how holy, to see her every thought assuming the colour of his own—her sentiments blending with his—her very soul melting into his, and becoming a part of himself ! How precious to him was that daily-increasing confidence in him which enabled him to read her every impulse as in a spotless mirror ! What a delightful, unwearying study a mind like hers, so capacious, so imaginative, yet so unsophisticated, and so pure ! He dreaded lest anything should ever happen to check the fullness of her trust in him. He never mentioned Courtney Park, and avoided, as much as possible, any allusion to his sister under the title of the Countess of Maltravers ; always calling her Julia, and his brother-in-law Henry, whenever he spoke of them, which was much seldomer than his affection for them would have led him to do, had he not been afraid of being betrayed inadvertently into remarks connected with them, that might have revealed more of their importance and his own, in their respective neighbourhoods, than he wished to draw attention to, as long as it could be any way concealed. Yet with the feeling of a child that goes continually, as near as it dares, towards the object that alarms it, Clement repeatedly strove to ascertain what would be Margaret's feelings on the discovery of his actual fortune and position in society. Still he could never elicit an expression from her that savoured of ambition, or of desire for any thing beyond the modest competency which she believed to be his, and which she every day felt more and more grateful to Heaven and to him for being permitted to share. One day he read Prior's "Henry and Emma" to her beneath the waving branches of the cedar, which had witnessed his own first "sidelong look of love" for her. She was charmed with the poetry, the sentiments, the story ; but she did not seem to think the "nut-brown maid" herself one whit the

happier for finding out that her lover was an earl of high degree instead of

“A banished man, condemned in woods to rove.”

“But would you not have been glad, my Margaret,” he asked, “had I been Henry, and you Emma, to have found me an honourable man, the owner of a lordly castle, instead of an exile, with nothing but my bow and arrows to keep you with?”

“Assuredly, for your sake,” said she, “and for my own too,” she added, laughing, “unless you are a much better shot than I give you credit for; but I could be very happy in a cottage, under the green trees, provided there were ‘no mistress in the wood.’ Ah! it was very cruel in Henry to try Emma in that way. You would not have done so, Clement.”

The next day he brought her the poems of Henry Kirke White.

“In this little volume, my Margaret,” he said, “is one of the most poetical things, for a boy of thirteen years old, in the English language, or, I might venture to say in any other. Will you read it?”——“No; do you read it, pray, dear Clement. I always understand everything so much better when you read it.”

So he opened the book, and drew her closer to him; for it should seem that one reason why she understood anything that he read, so much better than when she read it herself, was that she looked over the page at the same time, and then they had a sort of little running commentary between them, which, though it occasionally retarded the progress of the work, yet seemed greatly to add to the spirit of it. However, it is no part of our business to explain their system of “Reading made Easy;” so Clement began. Margaret fixing her eyes upon him, all the time that his were fixed upon the book, and upon the book, every time that his were raised from it to fix themselves upon her, which was very often. Indeed, it must be owned that they read wonderfully slowly whenever they read together; and then they so continually had something to say to each other, either connected with the subject they were reading about, or with some other subject quite different, that the poor

author was frequently lost sight of and altogether forgotten ; but we are falling into the very same fault without their excuse. Well, then, as we said before, Clement began.

“Mild offspring of a dark and sullen sire,
Whose modest form, so delicately fine,”—

and here he involuntarily passed his arm round Margaret's slender waist—

“Was nursed in whirling storms,
And cradled in the winds.”

“How pretty that is !” said Margaret, bending a little more over the page. Clement went on,

“Thee, when young Spring first questioned Winter's sway,
And dared the sturdy blusterer to the fight ;
Thee on this bank he threw,
To mark his victory.

In this low vale, the promise of the year,
Serene thou openest to the nipping gale,
Unnoticed and alone,
Thy tender elegance.

So Virtue blooms, brought forth amid the storms
Of chill adversity ; in some lone walk
Of life she rears her head,
Obscure and unobserved.

While every bleaching wind that on her blows
Chastens her spotless purity of breast,
And strengthens her to bear
Serene the ills of life.”

“Beautiful !” exclaimed Margaret, “Beautiful ! and at thirteen, too ! poor boy ! how young he must have begun to suffer, and to feel !” and her eyes, as she retraced the lines, filled with tears, which Clement thought it his duty to disperse forthwith, by a process which, though he could not claim the merit of being the inventor of it, he yet had the art of administering with unfailing efficaciousness.

“Exquisite !” said he, after a momentary pause ; “there is nothing like it.” He was speaking of the poetry, dear reader.—“Pope's ode at twelve years old,

“‘Happy the man, whose wants and care
A few paternal acres bound’

cannot be put in comparison with it. Tell me, my sweet Margaret, which stanza you like the best.”

Margaret, the rose upon whose cheek had

“Flushed a deeper bloom,”

under] the tear-dispersing operation in which Clement was such an adept, considered and reconsidered the verses.

"I think, said she, " this is the most imaginative—

" 'Thee, when young Spring first questioned Winter's sway,
And dared the sturdy blusterer to the fight ;
Thee on this bank he threw,
To mark his victory.'

It is so figurative—so spirited. I could fancy I see Spring going off victorious ! young and proud ; casting a triumphant look behind. It is so true, too ! The first primrose that I see I always feel that Spring has got the better of Winter ; but tell me, dear Clement, which stanza you prefer, you are such a far better judge than I can be."

"I ! dear Margaret ; Oh, I admire your own sweet portrait, which I see in every one of them !"

At that moment Mr. Slender, passing by the window, peered in between the geraniums and smiled on the young critics, with an expression altogether parental.

"At any rate, I am not the

" " — Offspring of a dark and sullen sire, "

said Margaret, returning her father's smile.

"No !" said Clement, " but your tender elegance is

" " Unnoticed and alone ! "

Ah how proud I should be to draw it forth, and show it to an admiring world ! "

"Nay, dear Clement, that would be vanity ; besides, do not you notice me ? and is not that enough ? "

"Still, my Margaret, the resemblance is complete. Have not you been

" " Brought forth amid the storms
Of chill adversity ?
Do not you rear your head
In some lone walk
Of life,
Obscure and unobserved ? " "

"Granted ! but in this 'lone walk' I met you, dear Clement. I might never have done so in a more crowded path—think how fortunate I have been ! how happy I am ! "

"But you would have preserved the same

" " — Spotless purity of breast "

in the sunshine of prosperity, as under the bleaching breeze
that strengthens you to bear

“ ‘Serene the ills of life.’ ”

“ But I have no ills now, dear Clement, and there is nobody in the world I would change places with—you are too rich as it is, dear Clement ; I could not help loving you, if you were ever so rich, but I am very sure I should not be so happy with you, if you were any richer.”

Clement was thankful that he had kept his secret thus far ; but the difficulty of still keeping it, every day increased. The pearls had staggered Mr. Slender, as an act of extravagance ; the girls, in their profound ignorance of such matters, knew not whether they might have cost twenty pounds or twenty shillings, and every succeeding offering he brought, however inexpensive in itself, was sure to bring down upon him some hint upon his profuseness, from his papa-in-law elect.

“ But what have I done, sir ? ” he would ask with unfeigned astonishment, and in a tone of humility ; “ I have availed myself of your kind permission to offer my dear Margaret a few trifles of the simplest description.”

“ But, my dear sir, when it comes to pearls—I do not call pearls trifles of the simplest description.”

“ Pearls are not diamonds,” argued Clement, and an ineffable smile stole across his countenance, as he thought of seeing his unconscious Margaret presented to royalty, with his mother’s diamonds glittering on her swan-like neck and polished brow.

“ Diamonds ! ” re-echoed Mr. Slender ; “ no, sure enough, they are not diamonds ; but who would ever think of diamonds that has not five or six thousand a year, and scarcely, I should imagine, with that ? You smile, sir, but you should always remember that Margaret brings you nothing but herself, and that I shall never have anything to leave you, except, perhaps, a few of my best sermons in manuscript.”

“ Will you trust me to order our wedding-breakfast, sir ? ” asked Clement, with a penitential air, after one of these lectures upon economy ; “ it will save so much trouble to have everything brought from Cambridge.”

“ Well, well,” said Mr. Slender, “ a breakfast is a sort of thing were you cannot go much beyond bounds : not but

what I know what a college breakfast may be made—I have seen two or three of them in my time.”

“And then the poor people, sir; they must rejoice with us. And Margaret’s school: I may order caps and ribbons, and bibs and tuckers for the girls—may I not? And a new gown for the mistress?” Clement felt a gentle pressure from the hand that he was holding.

“Oh,” exclaimed Lucy, “how delighted they will be! And Mrs. Dunthorne too—how glad I am! I was thinking of giving Mrs. Dunthorne a new ribbon myself—a white satin one.”

“I have a great respect for Mrs. Dunthorne,” said Mr. Slender; “she always reminds me of Shenstone’s ‘School-mistress,’ when

“ ‘She eyes her fairy throng, and turns her wheel around.’

A pretty poem that, sir, a very pretty poem; though most likely you never read it. Shenstone is out of fashion, I believe, now.”

“Indeed but I have, sir: Shenstone is a very favourite poet of mine, and I always think of him when I see a village school. We will have a school too, Margaret: a nice one. Margaret is so fond of a school, sir; you know I told you she wanted me to keep one, myself. Nay, you know you did; but you need not blush so, whenever I mention it—it was a very pretty thought——”

“You naughty one! did not you promise?”—cried Margaret, trying to stop his mouth with her small hand; but he went on—“a very nice little thought.” So she ran out of the room, and he after her; and she flew round the garden, and he overtook her, and so they played together like two babies—as, in fact, they were just then. Ah, Love may well be drawn as a child! There is more true wisdom, though, in his innocent sportiveness, than in the icy prudence and “grey hypocrisy” of the older man.

CHAPTER LI.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

THE wonderful *trousseau* has arrived. The word, it seems, signifies a wedding outfit.

Rose was just bringing in the kettle and the toast—for Lucy is no longer toastmaker-general,—with the pretty new tea-things, which we use, every evening, in compliment to Clement, when we heard a single knock at the door ; it was the carrier, with three wicker cases, covered with oilskin, they were light enough in weight, but of such ample dimensions that they completely filled up our narrow passage.

Lucy jumped about in an ecstasy. "It is the *trousseau*," she cried. "I am sure it is—what an odd thing it must be. I thought it was something all in a piece."

Margaret was more staid. "Let us pay the carrier," said she, "and send him away. I should not like him to talk about the things."

They were all carriage paid, nevertheless I gave him a shilling for his trouble, and he went away making as many bows and scrapes as if I had been his grace, and Margaret my lady.

I then proposed that before the packages were touched we should have tea, for I thought we should have very little chance of getting it hot, if we were to wait for it until after their contents had undergone an examination.

My daughters had the grace to comply, and with a good grace, too. I observed, however, that they only took one cup each, and did not eat a morsel. They just found out that they had dined somewhat later than usual. I thought it right to exercise their patience, or perhaps to prolong their pleasures of expectation ; and, therefore, I drank my accustomed three cups, and ate half a round more toast than usual, seeing it before me, so that the poor girls gained little, in point of time, by their abstemiousness ; but their good humour was equal to every attack upon it. Margaret poured out the tea, and Lucy handed me the toast with most admirable serenity of countenance, though they neither of them could help, between whiles, casting an eager, wondering look, towards the cases.

At length, I gave the wished-for signal, by transferring the tea-spoon, in my old-fashioned way, from the saucer to the tea-cup. No time was lost in ringing the bell, the table was cleared, and rubbed and polished, by Rose, with even more, as I saw my girls seemed to think, than her usual care. At length, all was finished, and Lucy, throwing her arms round my neck, said, "Now, dear papa, may we open the cases?"

No further objection could be made; I put on my spectacles to enable me to assist in unloosening the Gordian knots which the remains of some classical superstition, or habitual economy, rendered me unwilling to cut, when the covers of the wicker-cases were lifted up in the order in which they were numbered. In the first were two white dresses, and a variety of accompaniments, all most beautifully packed in rose-coloured wrappers; in the second, two white bonnets, two scarfs, and some lighter elegancies, which, however, we only guessed at, for dear Margaret, with a blush of modesty and delight, throwing herself into my arms, whispered, "Dear father, I think we had better not take the things out, I should not like to look at them any more, or try them on, till—" and her voice died away. I thought there was something very beautiful, and original, in her wish thus to hallow them for the occasion. Lucy who has the gift of divining everything that it is desirable to know, instantly entered into her sister's feelings. "We will not look at them now, darling," said she, shutting down the baskets, Clement ought to see them the first time, the very first time they are put on; but there is this one which we have not yet opened, we may just peep into it;" accordingly the strings were untied, the lid lifted up, and a cry of joy arose from my young ones. Here were no mixed feelings in the case, the contents were exultingly pulled forth, and lo! I beheld a complete suit, or rather I may say, an entire wardrobe for myself. Linen, canonicals, two suits of black, more things, in short, than I have ever had since the first year I was tutor to Lord H——, and, like a foolish young man as I was, spent the whole of my salary in fine clothes.

The girls were delighted, and, to say the truth, so was I. It had been a grief to me think how narrow—nay, how hopeless were my means of fitting out my dear Margaret, so

that, at any rate, her appearance should not disgrace him at the altar, and now I had the satisfaction to know that we should all of us appear respectable in his eyes, and in those of his friends, as well as of my own parishioners ; true, it will be with his own money, but Margaret sees in his gifts only his dear love, and receives every manifestation of it as a devout and grateful heart receives the blessed light and air of heaven. Even whilst we were speaking of him, his well-known knock made us start. We were certain it was his, as the old Scotch song says,—

“There’s music in his very foot,
When he comes up the stairs ;”

and in he came, smiling with generous delight as he threaded his way between the packages.

“Ah, the things are come,” said he, carelessly glancing his eye towards them ; “at least, such as you will want the first. The others are all on their way to our future home—got there by this time, I dare say.”

Margaret threw herself, with looks of unutterable love, into his arms.

“How kind you have been to us all !” she exclaimed.

I was beginning to make my acknowledgments, but he cut all our thanks short, and would talk of nothing but the arrangements for the morrow. I am to perform the sacred ceremony. Clement is to receive my Margaret from the hands of Lord Maltravers, who, as well as his sweet countess, lay aside their mourning, for the late earl, on this happy occasion. Lucy is to be the bridesmaid, and Lady Maltravers also will go to church. We are to breakfast when we return. Clement had requested permission to send the requisites from Cambridge, with suitable attendants, but I have begged that whatever the “Roebuck” may be able to supply shall be ordered there. I should be sorry to hurt the feelings of Mr. and Mrs. Greensides on such an occasion ; for, besides being my parishioners, I really believe they are very worthy people, in their way, and never tempt the labouring classes into drinking more than they can afford to pay for.

After breakfast I am to part with my dear child, who has been a delight and solace to me from her birth. Since

the death of her sainted mother, she has been my friend and confidant, as well as my housekeeper and companion. How many innocent hours has she gladdened to me by her smiles! how many anxious ones has she beguiled by her sympathy, and enlightened by her counsels! How often have I repeated, internally, whilst listening to her, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness."

Yet I must relinquish her to another. Never more will she be mine, as she has been! Never more will she belong to these humble walls, as she has done! irradiating them with the sunlight of her smiles, making them musical with the sweet intonations of her pleasant voice.

The curate had written thus far in his journal, when he heard a soft tread along the passage, and then a gentle tap at his chamber-door. He opened it—Margaret threw herself into his arms, saying, "Dear father, I come to beg your blessing and your prayers!"

"Assuredly, my child, you shall have them both. I need not ask you if you are happy in the thought of the approaching change in your condition—if your heart truly goes with your hand?"

"Happy! my dear father—my happiness is almost too much for me. When I think that to-morrow, with the blessing of Heaven, I shall be the wife of the only human being I could ever have loved as I love him, that it will be my duty, henceforth, to honour and obey in all things him whom I so fully respect and honour; that I am to be his dear companion and trusted friend for the remainder of my days, my heart swells as though it would burst through my bosom; and when, in addition to my own happiness, I consider that, through the kindness of Providence, and the generous noble nature of my dear husband, I may be made the humble instrument of benefit to you and dear Lucy, that you need never more feel anxiety for us, or fear the pressure of poverty for yourself,—oh! then, my dear father, I tremble at the unlooked-for share of good that has fallen to my lot! I have done nothing to deserve it. Oh, my father! you must watch over me, and admonish me continually! How can I

prove myself grateful enough for the blessings that the Almighty has vouchsafed me!" and she threw herself again into his arms, and wept upon his bosom pious tears of humility and thankfulness.

"Bless you, my child! a thousand blessings on your head!" exclaimed the happy parent, pressing her to his heart; "preserve this humble, grateful spirit—this sweet Christian state of mind—and doubt not that your prosperity will be safe to you. And pray for me, my child, that I also may continually keep before me the goodness of our blessed Lord; and as he has supported us through poverty and anxiety, let us daily, hourly, implore him to feed us with all the spiritual graces that our altered situation may require." Whilst her father spoke, Margaret, gradually withdrawing herself from his embrace, sank involuntarily upon her knees; he followed her example—they covered their faces, and prayed silently, fervently, for some minutes; and when they rose and embraced each other, their countenances glowed with an expression so radiant, so angelical, that they did, indeed, appear yet more favoured by Heaven in their interior perceptions than in their external prospects.

CHAPTER LII.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

THIS day has been one of the most agitating, yet the most happy days of my life. I have parted with my daughter, the pride and delight of my existence; but I have gained a son—and such a son! how can I be grateful enough to Heaven for him! He is worthy of her—they are formed for each other; may their Almighty Father shower down his choicest blessings upon their heads! not the mere temporal blessings of this life, but those precious spiritual gifts which shall draw them daily nearer to himself, whether it be His divine will to lead them through the "ways of pleasantness" and "paths of peace," which to all outward appearance are opening before them, or through the rougher road of trial, from which no mortal being can hope to be exempt, and which we are only called upon to tread for the strengthening

and purifying of our steps towards eternal life. I will, now that I am alone, compose my thoughts, and enter the events of the day in my journal, as succinctly as I can; haply when I am laid in the dust it may be read by my grandchildren, and awaken in their dear hearts an affectionate recollection of him by whom it was written.

I arose early, for I could not sleep. I went into my little study, and passed two hours in reading and prayer. I had just risen from my knees, with a frightened spirit, when the door gently opened, and Margaret presented herself before me clad all in white. She stood before me like a glorious vision, a celestial visitant! but oh, how like her mother she looked! "My Margaret!" I exclaimed, opening my arms, and advancing towards her. My voice sounded in my ears more like a wail than a gratulation; it seemed to strike on my dear child's heart, in the same manner, for she threw herself on my breast, exclaiming, "O my dear father, how can I leave you! how can I leave you!"

I felt her tears upon my cheek, and I felt my own coursing down it to join them; but I made a great effort to recover my fortitude. "Do not distress yourself my darling," I said, "with a single mournful thought on my account. Your happiness is mine; new duties are opening before you. Be as a wife all that you have been to me as a daughter and I shall be too thankful." The door again opened.

"Does she not look nice, dear papa?" cried Lucy in tones joyous as the morning song of the lark; "Margaret, you really are beautiful! your pretty dress does so become you," and she turned her sister round and round, and gazed upon her with an affectionate admiration which it cheered my heart to behold.

"Dear Lucy," said Margaret, "yours becomes you exactly the same, and you look every whit as well as I do; does she not, papa?"

"Oh yes," said Lucy, laughing, "that is a very likely story, and then it is of so much consequence how I look—so many people will fix their eyes on me of course, instead of on the bride!"

"Well," said I, "I will be impartial, and give you my real opinion;" so I put on my spectacles, and surveyed them both, with pretended gravity of criticism, from head to foot.

Poor things ! it was the first time in their lives that I had ever had the gratification of seeing them well-dressed ; and though they had always looked lovely and attractive in my eyes, I could not but acknowledge that the advantages of the toilette added considerably to their natural graces. I could examine them fully without fear of discomposing them, for Margaret cast her eyes to the ground, with the sweetest modesty, and Lucy's were riveted on her sister, with a fullness of delight which left her no room for a thought about herself. Their dresses were muslin, white as snow, with full soft folds marvellously becoming to Margaret's slight, and rather tall figure. Margaret's bonnet was ornamented with a wreath of orange-flowers ; Lucy's with one of lilies of the valley. Margaret's had the addition of a veil of Brussel's lace, which had but one fault, it was too superb ; but then it shaded her lovely face so interestingly. Besides, from the very earliest associations of history and poetry, we always so invariably attach the idea of a veil to a bride, that a little luxury in respect to that one article may be pardoned ; they had each some pretty sort of thing about their shoulders which they called scarfs, but the material puzzled me, it looked like a gossamer's web.

"Well, papa," cried Lucy, "speak honestly ! does not Margaret look the best ?"

"Do not we both look exactly alike ?" said Margaret, putting her arm around Lucy.

"Now, I will be very honest," said I. "You both look charmingly—better than I ever saw either of you look till now ; but, if I must give the palm to one, I think it would be to Margaret ; because I observe Lucy's dress is not put on quite so neatly, one side appears pinned, or folded a little unevenly, and her girdle or belt, or whatever you may call it, has slipped somewhat out of its place."

"Ah," said Margaret, hastening to correct the oversight, "it is not her fault, poor dear, she would dress me first, and she was so particular, and so exact, that she left herself no time ; and she would not let me stay to help her."

"No," said Lucy, "I knew papa would be longing to see you, were you not, dear papa ? and I shall make you dress next, for I have put out all your things, your beautiful new surplice, for the ceremony, and then your new black coat,

for the breakfast ; but we will have a cup of coffee first, it will do us all good."

So the dear child ran to see after it. She thinks of everybody, and everything. She seems to have grown ten years older, in steadiness and reflection, since Margaret's wedding-day was fixed. We were to meet Clement and Lord and Lady Maltravers in the church, at nine o'clock precisely. Lucy took good care that we should not be a minute after our time. We went through the garden and the paddock across the lane to the gate, which opens into the churchyard, close to the vestry-door. We thus escaped the crowd, strange as the expression seems with regard to our little village ; but so it was, that the street was actually full, I should not have thought the whole place could have furnished so many people ; but the unprecedented sight of two carriages-and-four had drawn everybody to the spot. When we got into the church, we found every pew occupied. It did my heart good to see such a congregation. I wished it had been Sunday, that I might have given them one of my very best sermons. Lord Maltravers was to give my dear child away. He made a very young-looking father, and Lady Maltravers, at his side, looked more like his sister than his wife. Clement's countenance was radiant with happiness. Margaret's sweet face was suffused with a crimson glow, when she saw him, it faded the next instant into the paleness of the lily ; but she went through the ceremony with great self-possession. As for me, I felt inspired,—never, I think, did I read the service so impressively : but truly it is a solemn thing to give the child of one's bosom into the keeping of another for life. Had I not felt so assured as I did from my own, almost daily, observation, for the last two months, of the many excellent qualities of our dear Clement, the purity of his principles, the sweetness of his disposition, the integrity of his heart, I verily believe I should never have had the courage to pronounce the words which were to make him, for evermore, the possessor and guardian of my choicest treasure.

As soon as we got into the vestry, Clement kissed his bride, his sister-in-law, and his own sister, and shook hands with me, with a cordiality that went to my heart—it was so filial ! I gave him and my child my blessing, joining their

hands, for a second time, in my own. Lady Maltravers then kissed my Margaret, and said, "Now my dear Margaret, you are really my sister—how happy we shall be together! and here is another sister, too," embracing Lucy affectionately, and then her husband went through the same ceremony, and I saluted Lady Maltravers myself, and then my daughters, and we all shook hands again, all round, and every countenance beamed with joy.

We then proceeded to make the entries in the register, many of my most respectable parishioners came in as witnesses, and proffered their congratulations. Among the rest good Mr. Allspice, who, nevertheless, looked a little blank, I thought; for he had always a sort of kindness for Margaret. However, he offered her his good wishes, in a very proper manner, and she thanked him very prettily. He is a worthy man, and I shall always do him the justice to say he is a fair-dealing tradesman, and a lenient creditor; which is a truly Christian virtue. Everybody that came in had cake and wine presented to them; and when we left the church Clement told the clerk to let there be no lack to any who might come afterwards. He had presented him with five guineas, to the poor fellow's great amazement, and he left twenty-five more with the churchwardens, for the poor of the parish; thank God they are not very numerous, his bounty will, therefore, be a real help to them; particularly to poor widow Hopkins, who wants it most of any. It was decided that we should walk home, for indeed it is such a mere step from the church to the parsonage, that it would have had the appearance of great ostentation to have kept two carriages-and-four waiting at the porch, merely as one may say, to get in at one side, and out at the other. But Clement had another motive, of which I was in the secret. He had prepared a surprise for Margaret, who, as we approached our own gate, had the pleasure to see her school, with the mistress at their head, all waiting to present her with bouquets of flowers. They were all, mistress and all, attired in new gowns of pearl-coloured stuff, with white aprons and mittens, and muslin caps, trimmed with white satin ribbons. They looked so nice and so happy, that Margaret was quite delighted. I saw her press Clement's

arm, as she exclaimed, "Oh how pretty"—adding, in a low voice, "how kind in you, dear Clement, to think of me so."

She kissed the children all round, and would have made them come into the house to have cake, but the mistress informed her that a repast was set out for them in the school-room with all sorts of nice things; indeed, Clement had thought of everybody. I found he had given orders for all the poor, who should apply for it, to have meat and bread, and ale supplied to them at the "Roebuck," with plum-buns for the children, and had, moreover, desired Mrs. Greensides to invite as many of her neighbours as her house would hold, to as good a dinner as she could give them, and to debit him with the whole expense. Well might Creykedale look in such a bustle, and so gay! Not a heart in it, nor a heart around, that he had not made glad; everybody walking about in their holiday clothes as if it had been Martinmas time. Our little maid Rose was as smart as any of them,—all in white—Clement's gift. She had run to the church to see the ceremony, and got back again in time to wait at breakfast. Everything had been prepared, as if by magic, during our absence. An elegant—nay, a sumptuous appearance the table presented. It was covered with splendid plate, belonging, I suppose, to the college—as Clement's servant had brought everything—wines in profusion—in a caterer's cart from Cambridge. The finest fruits, and flowers of the rarest sorts, formed the chief decorations; but the humbler offerings of the little girls were not forgotten among them. I rather suspect there had been quite an exhibition of the whole affair whilst we were away. No matter if it were so, it afforded an innocent amusement to the spectators, and I think they would all rejoice in Margaret's good fortune. We all sat down, thank God, in excellent spirits. Margaret looked sweetly happy; Clement all admiring love; Lucy, and Lord and Lady Maltravers, joyous and playful as children. The bells sounded merrily in our ears.

"How stoutly those young fellows ring!" said Lord Maltravers, and well they might, for Clement had left ten guineas among six of them.

"I have a good mind to go and have a pull with them

myself. How was it, Julia, that we had no bell-ringing at our wedding ? it puts one in such capital spirits."

Lady Maltravers looked a little confused.

"We were so silly," she said, "we did nothing then as we ought to have done."

"Well," said her husband, gaily, "we have done everything ever since as we ought, what say you, Lucy ?—do not we look a very well-behaved, steady married couple ?"

"You look quite suited to each other," replied Lucy, "but I should never have guessed, if I had not been told, that you were married at all."

"Ah, that is because we are so like lovers ; is it not, Julia ?"

And then there followed a great deal of joking and laughing, which I was glad to encourage, because I never like a wedding-day to be saddened by too much sensibility.

I saw my sweet Margaret glance ever and anon towards the timepiece over the fireplace ; and as the hour of departure approached, I perceived her colour come and go, and the tears spring into her dark eyes when they met mine, so that I even did myself the violence to avoid them, in order to keep her feelings as calm as possible. But the moment arrived. They were to start at noon, as they had a good six hours' ride before them, and no sooner did the hour-hand point at twelve than the rattle of wheels, the clatter of horses, were heard at a distance ; and it seemed only an instant after that the two travelling carriages and four—the postilions decked out in white favours—drove up to the gate, with all the boys of the village after them. My heart felt like a lump of lead in my breast. I got up and walked towards the window. Clement whispered to his sister to shorten the scene of leave-taking. She rose, and went upstairs with the girls to put on their travelling equipments. The time seemed very long whilst they were away ; yet when they came back, it seemed as if it had been too short. Margaret's eyes were red with weeping, but she did not say a word : both Lucy and Lady Maltravers had tears in their eyes, but smiles on their lips,—like a sweet April morn of showers and sunshine. As for me, I could not speak, and would not think. Lady Maltravers was the first to set us an example of courage.

Coming up to me, like a child to a parent, she stood on tip-toe to offer me her *vermeil* cheek.

"Farewell! dear Mr. Slender," said she in her sweet voice, "for a little time only, I hope; you will soon be coming to Courtney Lodge, and if I should not be there, though I hope I shall, you will not, I am sure, think it too much trouble to come to Maltravers Hall to see my husband and me."


I said something, I do not remember what, about her doing me honour; and then my dear Margaret threw her arms round my neck, and uttered her low farewell in tones I durst scarcely listen to for fear of being unmanned; her last words were—"Write to me, my dear father, write to me to-morrow, and often, and tell me that you take care of yourself;" and then Clement led her away, and my little Lucy took her place in my arms, saying as she kissed me again, "And write to me too, dear papa, and I will write you such a long letter; you will get it at breakfast time—only think how nice it will be!" A few minutes more and the postilions cracked their whips—the horses flew off—and I fell upon my knees and wept bitterly.

It was not that I regretted the departure of my darling,—no, to secure to her the happiness, the protection, the love, the competence, her prospects afford every hope of, I would not have repined had I been condemned to pass the remainder of my days in a dungeon; but I thought of my own blissful wedding-day—of the angel I had lost. She who had shared my poverty, and soothed my cares; dear sufferer! when our privations denied her the comforts her failing health required. Oh! had she been spared to me! to rejoice with me in the mercies vouchsafed our dear child!—to partake with me in the abundant comforts with which I am now, thanks to the kindness of my heavenly Father, surrounded! but "the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord." I rose from my knees in a frame of mind so grateful, so tranquil, so full of love to the Great Source of all Good, the Infinitely Wise, the Omnipotent, that I can scarcely imagine the earthly thing which could at this moment have added to my interior happiness. I walked up and down the garden; the sounds of village merriment came to my ear upon the soft spring gale

that rustled in the branches of the cedars—they gladdened my heart ; the poor people were rejoicing over Clement's bounty—God bless him for it, and ever incline his heart to sympathize in the joys and sorrows of his fellow-creatures !

Rose came to ask me what time I would like dinner, but I told her I desired none ; so in about half-an-hour the little creature, of her own accord, brought the tea-things under the cedar-tree, and the tea ready made and boiling hot ; it was very pretty and thoughtful in her. Whilst I was taking it, many of my neighbours called at the gate to wish me joy, but they did not come in, saying they thought perhaps I should like better to be left alone just after parting with my daughter ; they were quite right, and showed more real native politeness in this considerate conduct, than all the congratulations and compliments they could have uttered, would have done.

The moon rose behind the cedar, as I sat under its branches, and watched their shadows flickering about on the grass, like hopes and fears in the human mind, whilst I listened to the joyous peals that came from the church bells in honour of my Margaret's marriage. The moon had climbed high above our favourite tree before I left the garden. I found the fire blazing cheerfully, my arm-chair drawn closer to it than I had left it, my spectacles, and the book I had been reading the day before, on the little table at my elbow. Rose is a good girl ; she is determined I shall not miss my daughters, but I did miss them ; nevertheless, I cheered myself with the thought that by that time the happy party had arrived at the place of their destination, and were thinking of me, if they had time to think of me at all, with the same kindly feelings with which I was thinking of them. So I wrote my journal the remainder of the evening, and now I am going to put up my prayers and thanksgivings, and then retire to rest. The house seems strangely quiet, the voices of the young are like the songs of birds, they seem to thrill the very atmosphere with gladness. How still it is without them ; but I shall hear the lark when I wake. Yea, though "sorrow and heaviness be at night, joy cometh in the morning."



CHAPTER LIII.

FAMILY FEUDS.

VERY different was the aspect of the Rectory from that of the curacy, on the happy day of Margaret's marriage. At the curacy every face was irradiated with joy ; every one that approached it caught the genial atmosphere, and went on his way rejoicing. One kindly sentiment seemed to knit together all who came within the sphere of the new-married pair ; and the peace and love that centred in their own bosoms, seemed, like circles in the water, to diffuse themselves wider and wider, as far as there was room for them to spread. Never had such a day been seen in Creykedale before ; such a one may never be seen in it again. At any rate, it produced an unceasing topic of admiration for the present generation in that sequestered spot, and most likely will be of traditional reverence and wonder for their descendants.

The first actual information of Clement Courtney's marriage was conveyed to the rector by a messenger express, who duly delivered a small basket, lined with white satin, and containing a most inviting-looking wedding-cake, thickly iced, and deliciously frosted with white sugar-candy, which sparkled amid the rose-coloured envelopes, and white and silver favours in which it lay embedded. On the top of it was a note from the happy bridegroom himself, enclosing cards from Mr. and Mrs. Courtney, Courtney Park.

To say the truth, Clement had not had courage to disclose, in person, to the Plufly family, the appalling fact that he was going to marry the curate's daughter, when he must have known very well that he might have had either of the rector's, if he had made up his mind to connect himself so closely with the ecclesiastical establishment of his country. It was, in fact, the certainty of that knowledge that had made a coward of him. He was thoroughly good-natured ; he shrunk from the idea of giving pain. He had no pleasure in punishing faults, or mortifying follies. He had spent many social hours at the Rectory, where even the every-day character of its inhabitants, and common-place nature of the conversation, was, in some measure, a relief to

his mind, whilst it was still too much depressed by the loss of his parents, and ruffled by anxiety for his sister, to seek higher excitement than that of welcome, and the liberty to come and go as he pleased. He had seen through the little nets and snares that were laid for him on all sides, but he could forgive the maternal hopes that spread them, on the score that a rich bachelor must always be surrounded by such, as long as he chose to retain his freedom ; and as for the young ladies, to say the truth, he would have given them credit for still less sense than they really possessed, had they been capable of seeing him, from day to day, without becoming sufficiently sensible of his attractions to desire to display their own to the utmost to him in return. So he worded his note with all the tact he was master of ;—rallied himself, and entreated the ladies not to do so, upon the invincible shyness he felt with regard to announcing the surrender he was going to make of his liberty, before it had actually taken place ; returned his grateful thanks for hospitality received, expressed his hope that he should be allowed the opportunity of returning it, in part, at Courtney Park, where Mrs. Courtney—(“ Oh !” exclaimed Margaret, nervously, “ you had better not mention me.” Courtney laughed, and went on)—would rejoice to see friends with whom she knew he had been so happy ; and then, with individual remembrances to the lady herself, to the doctor, to Miss Pluffy, to Mr. Augustus Myddleton Plumtree Pluffy, and to Mrs. Francis Shirley, for whom also he sent gloves, favours, and cake, the very first they should see or write to her, he concluded with the well-known signature which had so often been admiringly gazed upon by Mrs. Pluffy and her daughters, as a model of beautiful calligraphy, fraught with indefinable interest ; but now it stood forth as indicative of Clement Courtney only—no longer “ the glass of fashion,” “ the mirror of courtesy,” the *beau idéal* of ten thousand graces and virtues, in actuality and anticipation ; in short, no longer a bachelor, but simply Mr. Courtney, a married man, like many scores of other married men whom the Pluffy family had seen within the circle of their own experience, settle down, from dashing collegians into sober country squires.

Still it was a blow, disguise itself as it would, and was felt as such by father, mother, son, and daughter. The doctor

felt a momentary support against the shock in the confirmation it brought him of his own foresight and penetration.

"You see, my dear, I was not so far wrong in what I always told you I thought about Mr. Courtney, and as to what I have latterly heard about him."

"No, doctor, to be sure you were not—you never are wrong. I never knew you to be mistaken in any one thing ever since I knew you," said poor Mrs. Plufty, in the deepest tones of humility."

The doctor humanely forbore to insist any further upon his own superiority in all things.

"Well," said he, "nothing ever astonishes me. I should not be astonished if I were to find myself at Creykedale, and see Mr. Slender in his carriage; indeed, as likely as not, for of course Mr. Courtney will give him the Courtney Vicarage, a good eight or nine hundred a year, and old Jackson is turned of eighty."

"Dear me, how very provoking it is!" exclaimed Mrs. Plufty, with eyes full of condolence.

"Why, mother, I do not think my father could have held that living, with Gormanton and Creykedale," said the heir-apparent, by way of consolation.

"But you might have held it, I suppose, sir, in due time," said the doctor; "we might have had an understanding between us, and the half would have made a very pretty beginning for a young man; at least I know I should have thought so when I was your age."

"Yes, sir," said the scapegrace, "but the age improves, and I dare say I could have managed to have spent the whole of it very well."

"Augusta, my dear, you will like to keep Mr. Courtney's note, will you not?" said her mamma, offering it to her as she spoke.

"No, indeed," responded the young lady, tossing it from her, "what should I want it for?"

"I thought, my dear, you would like it for your autograph album."

"I do not want so many of one sort," said Miss Plufty, "I have quite enough of Mr. Courtney's already."

And, indeed, it would have been no fault of her own if she had not had; as she had made a point of preserving every

note or scrap of his writing that she could lay her hands upon, ever since she had at first become acquainted with him.

"Well," said the doctor, "remember it is always best to keep friends with everybody; that is, of course, I mean, everybody whose friendship is worth anything; particularly with a man in so influential a position in society as Mr. Courtney. After all the Scripture truly saith, 'Promotion cometh not from the east, nor from the west, nor yet from the south.'"—He did not continue the words of this quotation,—and why? God is the Judge, "He raiseth up one, and putteth down another;" but went on,—“We can never say where it may come from, or in what shape. So I beg you will write a congratulatory reply to Mr. Courtney, with all our best wishes; and I shall, perhaps, drop a line myself to Mr. Slender; though, if he had been a man of the nice sense of honour I had foolishly fancied him, he would never have encouraged Mr. Courtney's visits, for he could scarcely, I should think, ever have flattered himself they would terminate as they have done.”

"No, to be sure, doctor, as you say, it was not at all nice or honourable in him."

"I think it was abominable in the girls!" exclaimed Miss Pluffy, "that mealy-looking Margaret—what a hypocrite she must be! I never could bear either of them. I cannot think what put it into Mr. Courtney's head to want to get acquainted with them. I dare say they were always throwing themselves in his way. Girls like them can run about, along the road or anywhere."

At that instant Simpson rushed in breathless, "Oh, ma'am, miss; if you please, the wedding-chaises is a coming up the lane; if you run quick into the garden, you can catch a sight of them over the wall."

"Indeed, I should be sorry to stir an inch," said Miss Pluffy. "Who wants to see them?"

Mrs. Pluffy answered the question by walking out of the room at her utmost speed; and, taking a short cut across the garden, arrived just in time, at the precise angle where Emily had first beheld Shirley, on his knees, before her, to see the white favours of four postilions dash round the corner. Poor Mrs. Pluffy! her eyes filled with tears. She turned away.

"Well!" said she to Simpson, who was straining her neck over the wall, at the hazard of tumbling over, and breaking it, to catch the last sound rather than sight of the bridal party, "Mr. Courtney is a very excellent young gentleman, and I shall always feel like a mother for him."

"I'm sure I wish you was his mother, ma'am," said Simpson, recovering her balance. "They say he has acted so nobly at Creykedale; they say he wanted to have a whole hox roasted, only there wasn't anything big enough to put it in; and they had such a grand breakfast, and gold and silver hornaments, all from Cambridge,—and such a fine dinner at the 'Roebuck,' for everybody that the house would hold; and all the people walked two and two, and gave three cheers."

"I should not think that likely, Simpson. Mr. Courtney would not do things in such a vulgar style—to be sure, he has not married a gentlewoman, and that makes a difference."

Simpson muttered something about people's having a right to please themselves, and nobody could blame anybody if anything lucky came in their way; and as she had given sundry signs of insubordination lately, for servants, like rats, have often an instinctive perception when a house is going to fall; and as any changes in the establishment were just then not particularly desirable, Mrs. Pluffy wisely chose not to hear, or understand the remark, and returned to the house. There she found the doctor and Augustus engaged in serious discussion on the state of the family affairs and financial resources. The doctor honestly confessed that his creditors became daily more and more clamorous, and the unexpected marriage of Mr. Courtney, who had long, by delicate inuendo and cunningly diffused reports, been destined for one of the Misses Pluffy, was not likely to make them less importunate.

"The fact is," said the doctor, eyeing the ceiling and apostrophizing it with a pinch of snuff, "I see how it will be—they will sequester my living, and I shall have to go to Creykedale, and be my own curate. The duty will not be very heavy; at least, I shall not make it so. At my time of life it cannot be expected that I should—and I am resigned to the worst. I advise Augusta the next respectable offer she may have,"—this was a delicate way of hinting

at Mr. Muggins,—“to accept it. As for Emily, as she has made her bed, so must she lie; and my notion is, she will not find it a hard one, after all; and you, Augustus, must try to qualify yourself for——”

“Oh, do not trouble yourself about me, sir; if you and my mother, and Augusta, can make shift for a while, I can take care of myself: indeed, I have made up my mind. I shall take to the road.”

“To the road!” shrieked Mrs. Pluffy, in dismay. “Dear me, Augustus, pray do not talk so shockingly, and so wickedly. You will certainly come to the gallows!”

“Never fear, mother,” replied the incorrigible, taking out his cigar-case. “I shall never do anything unlike a gentleman—first of its kind, depend upon it—whatever it may be.”

“First of its kind, indeed! was not Dick Turpin the first of his kind, that used to be called the ‘Flying Highwayman’? that we read of in ‘Knight’s Remarkable Biographies,’ or some such books for the instruction of the people; and was not George Barrington, the pickpocket, such a gentleman that Lord Chesterfield said he wished his son had been half as much of one? and yet was not one hung and the other transported, as all such wretches ought to be?”

The doctor had made no further remark upon his son’s avowed intent than what might be understood from an elevation of the eye-brows, a second survey of the ceiling, and a second pinch of prince’s mixture. The hero of the road, therefore, felt himself called upon to explain.

“You mistake me, dear mother.” Augustus Middleton Plumtree Pluffy had always been an affectionate son enough when his selfishness did not interfere with his duty. “I do not mean to take purses upon the road, but to cut along it in such style as to let nobody else take them from any one under my protection for the time being. I should like to drive the Cambridge coach, or to be the guard; Benbart, of Christchurch, Oxford, did it, and I do not see why I should not. He was guard first, but he could not stomach giving out the parcels, so he mounted the box, and he was called ‘The Classical Coachman.’”

“And you would be called ‘The Unclassical Coachman,’”

said the doctor, dryly. He was known as a rich fool, and you would be known as a poor one—that makes all the difference.”

“I suppose his father made him rich, and mine has made me poor, that makes all the difference on the other side,” retorted Augustus.

“*Sir-r-r*,” said the doctor, with a long accentuated aspiration that made it sound very like “*Sirrah*!” and rising majestically, and directing his ample proportions towards the door, “if you descend to personalities I have done with you. I do not say it is undutiful, because I plainly perceive your moral sense is indurated—obscured—in short, lost. But it is ungentelemanly, and as such I have done with you.”

And he closed the door, with himself on the other side of it.

“Dear me, Augustus!” cried Mrs. Pluffy, “how can you be so foolish? Your papa thinks you are in earnest, I know he does, by his way of going out of the room; and it is quite impossible you should be! Besides, even if you were so silly, you must give security for a place of that kind, low as it is; and who would be security for you? I am sure your papa would not. You could not expect it.”

“Oh, as for that, I do not mean to trouble him. I have got a promise of the place, whenever I like: either before or behind. Simpson’s cousin will manage that for me—his father is a proprietor, and he is a very clever fellow, himself, and a capital judge of horseflesh. He would like very well to hold the ribbons; but he makes more money at Newmarket. Everybody knows him there; and Simpson says he might have married a trainer’s daughter, with ten thousand pounds, and a deuced fine girl, too, for I have seen her.”

Poor Mrs. Pluffy! here she saw another cloud gathering in her domestic horizon. She had not liked Simpson’s manner of late, nor her expressions that very morning; and she had remarked that her caps and handkerchiefs had, for some weeks past, been slightly impregnated with the odour of cigars, which might be accounted for from the circumstance of the laundry being very near a little room Augustus originally called, or rather miscalled, his “Study;” but which, since he had come to man’s estate, consequently to years of discretion, he had chosen to denominate the “Divan,” and to fit up with pipes and cushions accordingly.

Miss Pluffy maintained a dignified silence during the discussion, and busied herself in weeding, not only her autograph album, but her writing-desk, blotting-book, and work-box, of every scrap of paper on which the handwriting of Clement Courtney had ever been impressed ; and having made an *auto-da-fé* of the fragments, she had the satisfaction of seeing the last spark expire, emblematic of her own hopes, just as the dinner-bell summoned the family party to the occupation which, as long as it lasts,

“ Knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,”

almost as effectually as sleep, that great soother of human miseries, of which “ Sancho Panza ” says, “ blessed is he that invented it, for it wraps a man round like a blanket.”

CHAPTER LIV.

THE FIRST LETTER.

“ COURTNEY PARK.

“ MY DEAR, DEAR PAPA !—Only think of my going to write you a long letter ! I ! who never wrote a letter in my whole life before, excepting once, and that was to my doll. Still a long one this will be, I know, and for two reasons : first, because I promised you it should be so, and secondly, because I have so many delightful things to tell you ; so you see, dear papa, I have made a doubly reasonable beginning. But you will say I am growing saucy, so now I will really begin in good earnest.

“ I need not say anything about our leaving our pretty, pretty little home, because you know how dear Margaret wept upon the threshold, as she turned to embrace you again and again ; and how she kissed her hand, and smiled through her tears on all our poor people and neighbours, who were standing round the gate to wish her good-by ; and how kind Clement was, and how he gave away his money, right and left, and made all hearts glad, and how merry Lord and Lady Maltravers were ; and how they made nurse lift dear baby up, when they got into their carriage, to clap his little hands at you, dearest papa ; and how we all kept looking out after you, and kissing our hands, and waving our handkerchiefs to you, till you were no longer in sight. It seemed only a minute, the horses went so quick. You cannot think, dear papa, how nice it is to travel with four horses ; it is so gay and so pretty to see the postilions’ heads popping up and down, one before another, and with their nice white favours too. But you do not know that dear Margaret wept afresh when we could no longer see the dear little parsonage-house, and the old elms at the gate, nor even

the top of our beautiful cedar, under whose spreading branches we have so often brought out our tea things, and our bread and butter, on a nice summer's evening.

" 'My dear father will miss us so much,' she sobbed out, 'when he goes back into the little parlour, and looks round it, and finds himself alone.'——' But he will not be alone, dear Margaret,' I said; 'he will have our happiness with him to keep him company.'

" Was not that bravely said, dear papa? for I had to gulp down my own tears as I spoke; and wisely too: for dear Clement kissed me and said, 'Well said, little philosopher,' and then he turned to Margaret and kissed her too, and drew her closer to him, and I looked out of the window to smile at Lady Maltravers, who kept putting her pretty head out and calling to us not to go so quick, she wanted to talk to us; and Lord Maltravers asked us what we were in such a hurry about; 'Why could not we take it easy?' he said, in his droll way.

" When we stopped to change horses, Clement would have the basket of favours opened, to give some to the next postilions, and to the landlady and people at the inn; and he paid everybody so nobly, and we had so many good wishes, and bows, and curtsies. Oh, it was quite delightful! And Lord Maltravers was in such spirits, and was so droll, whenever we stopped, and pretended that he must change places with Clement, for that his sister had something to say to him. And then off we dashed again, and we began to leave the dusty high road, and wind through nice shady lanes; and I was so glad! And the wild honeysuckle and the dog-rose blossomed in the hedges, and sent out such a delicious perfume on the evening breeze, it reminded me so of home! and the blackbirds called to one another, and high trees arched over our heads; it was so sweet and solemn, too! But we soon came out again upon a wide road that ran by the side of a fine wood; after we had gone on for three or four miles, Clement suddenly called out, 'Here we are, at last, thank God!' And we stopped at such a sweet place. A pair of large handsome gates were thrown open, and at one side of them was a pretty house, so pretty! it was all of wood, with a deep shelving roof, and a broad sort of verandah all round, and a staircase outside, and sweet little diamond-paned windows with pointed arches; it was almost buried in clematis, and virginia creeper, and a number of balsams and geraniums, as fine as ours, were placed in pots on benches, one above another, round the door, and such a venerable old woman stood curtsying at it. I was so silly, I thought, to be sure, it was *the* house, and I cried out, 'Oh, Margaret, what a sweet place! how happy you will be!' Clement laughed so; but dear Margaret looked a little bewildered; she said, 'Yes, that I am very sure I shall,' and then Clement laughed more heartily still. 'Well,' said he, 'do not make up your mind to stay here, till we have taken a look at the other end of the avenue;' and on we went for another mile, only think, between stately rows of elms, with glimpses of beautiful park scenery between them, till we came within sight of a great large house; the windows were all lighted up, and as we drew nearer, we saw several servants in fine liveries standing at the wide-open door with torches. Oh, my dear papa, Clement is ten times richer and grander than he made himself

out to us ! If I had known what a guest must he really was, I am sure I never durst have put the kitten in his pocket, or burnt his hands with the cakes just hot out of the oven, or locked him up in the pantry, or played him any of the silly tricks I used to puzzle myself with inventing for him : indeed, I do not think any of us would have been quite so much at ease with him as we always were. But I must go on. When we got up to the door, and the carriage stopped, the church bells set off a ringing—such a joyous peal it seemed ! then dear Clement handed Margaret out, and when she had crossed the threshold, and stood in the hall, he kissed her, and said, ‘Welcome, my dear wife, thrice welcome to the home of my fathers !’ And then he turned towards all the people around, and he drew himself up, and looked so dignified and graceful, and said, still holding Margaret by the hand, ‘This lady is Mrs. Courtney, my wife, and your future mistress ! I feel very certain that we have all your good wishes for our happiness together.’ And then they all said, ‘God bless you, sir. God bless your lady, and grant you many years of happiness together !’

“Poor Margaret was as white as a sheet, and trembled like an aspen leaf ; but she smiled very sweetly, and said in her soft low voice, ‘I thank you all, from my heart ; I hope we shall make you happy, too.’ And then Clement led her so kindly into a fine room, where there was an arm-chair, as grand as Doctor Plunk’s could be, and he seated her in it, and said, ‘This is your own chair, my dear Margaret. This is the library, and here I hope we shall pass many delightful mornings and evenings together.’ Dear Margaret cast her eyes round the room, so full of books, dear papa, and maps and pictures, and a pair of globes, and great people’s heads—busts, they call them—and she said, ‘I hope so too, dear Clement ; it will be my own fault if I do not make myself a companion for you in time, with so many advantages.’

Then in came Lord and Lady Maltravers, for they had stopped behind to show the baby to the steward and the housekeeper—such nice respectable-looking old people ! and then they welcomed Margaret to her new home, and we all embraced one another all round ; it is so nice to be so affectionate ! I felt so happy ! And then Clement said, if we wished to change our dresses we had no time to lose. And just as he spoke a deep bell struck, and made me jump so ! ‘That is the first dinner-bell,’ said he ; ‘you have only half an hour.’ And then he rang and the footman came to the door ; no, not the footman, but his own *gentleman* as he is called, and well he may be, for he looks quite like one, and wears a white waistcoat and silk stockings, and a gold watch chain. ‘Send Mrs. Meadows to Mrs. Courtney,’ said Clement ; and the gentleman bowed and went away, and Mrs. Meadows came in ; quite a lady, dear papa, she seemed to me. She had on a purple silk, and a lace pelerine and cap, and black silk apron, and black netted mittens. And Lady Maltravers spoke so kindly to her, and took her hand, and said, ‘How do you do, dear Mrs. Meadows ! This is my dear sister, Mrs. Courtney ; you will be glad to have a mistress in the house again, I am sure.’

“‘I shall indeed, my lady, said she, curtsying so respectfully ; ‘the house will look like itself again.’ And tears came into her eyes papa, and into poor Lady Maltravers’ too ; for it seems this same person

was lady's-maid to her mamma, and was the very one who caught the same fever, in returning from Crosby Hall, of which poor Mrs. Courtney died. 'Meadowes has often dressed me, my dear sister,' said Lady Maltravers, wiping her eyes, 'when I was a naughty little wild thing, and would not stand still two minutes together to have my frock tied, or my hair brushed. She always gave dear mamma satisfaction, and I am sure she will you, too.'—'I shall try my best, madam,' said Mrs. Meadowes.—'I am sure you will please me, Mrs. Meadowes,' said Margaret; 'your having pleased my husband's mother will always give you a great claim upon my regard.'

"It was the first time that Margaret had called Clement her husband, and you cannot think, dear papa, what a sweet dignity seemed to transfuse itself into her face and figure as she spoke. And oh, if you had but seen how beautifully Mrs. Meadowes dressed her. She plaited her sunny hair in such lovely tresses, and then she braided it round her head, and fastened it at the back with a delicious little cluster of orange flowers—*real*. And then there was a dress of rich white silk, with a beautiful silvery pattern upon it, like drops of dew sparkling in the sun, and a lace collar with points, and it was fastened on the bosom with that pretty pearl brooch in the shape of a snowdrop—dear Clement's first present to her after they were engaged—you remember, papa, how pretty we thought it—and then there were her white gloves, and her embroidered handkerchief, delicately scented, and when everything was finished she looked like a queen; no, not like a queen, I mean like that lovely Lady Jane Grey in the engraving, when they came to offer her the crown.

"Then came my turn. 'Will you give me leave to dress you now, Miss Slender?' It sounds so odd to me, dear papa, to hear myself called Miss Slender, and to see people waiting upon me, as if I were some fine lady; you would laugh, I am sure, to see your little Lucy set up so. I am ready to laugh at it myself a dozen times a day, but I try to look as grave as I can.

"Well, so I sat down, and had my head twisted about all manner of ways; but my hair would neither plait, nor braid, nor pin, nor do anything but hang about my face in ringlets, as it always does, though ringlets, it seems, are out of fashion; so Mrs. Meadowes said she had better let it have its own way, it was *my style*. But only think how kind it is in Clement, dear papa, he has had a number of beautiful dresses and everything I can want, made for me, as well as for Margaret; but I shall leave all the finest of the things here, till I come again. It would be silly indeed in me, and worse than silly—very wrong, and very unbecoming my station, ever to think of putting them on at any other time than when I am with dear Margaret, just to do her credit. Our neighbours would be sure to laugh at me, or to envy me; and I should like them to do one as little as the other. But is it not wonderful, my dear papa, that all our fine things fit us as exactly as if they had been measured for me, and tried on half a dozen times? You remember what cutting and contriving, and fitting and altering, Margaret and I had about the famous Devonshire brown silk; and lo! here are a dozen beautiful silks and satins, and gauzes, all fitting as exactly as Cinderella's little glass slipper! Surely Cinderella's godmother must

have had a hand in them: indeed, I sometimes think we must be dreaming of a fairy tale altogether. But do you know, dear papa, I do think it has been Lady Maltravers' contrivance, for she borrowed Margaret's pink gingham one morning, that very gingham you did not like to see her go about in at Christmas, because you thought it so cold for her, and which she says she never will part with, because she had it on the first time that she ever saw Clement. I told her she was thinking of that old king of Bohemia we were reading about last winter, who always had his thick shoes hung up in his closet, to remind him that he had once been a labouring peasant. Well, Lady Maltravers took it away with her, pretending she thought the make of it so pretty; and then she said to me, 'You and I are exactly of a size. I have a morning dress in the carriage that I have just got from my dressmaker's, I wish you would try it on for me, that I may see how I like it.' So I did; and she looked at it as if she was considering something. 'Yes, I see,' said she, 'it is a little, little too tight in the waist for you, and a full inch too short in the skirt, so I am not so tall as I fancied myself.' And you may depend upon it, papa, it was in that manner she was able to give our measures so exactly to Madame D——, who they say is a very great lady in her way, and a very good one, too; and keeps her carriage, and is dressmaker and milliner to the Queen.

"Lady Maltravers was delighted that we looked so nice, and liked everything so much. And we went into the library again, and Clement looked so pleased! but we had not time to sit down, for the dinner-bell rang again; and he handed Margaret into the dining-room, and placed her at the head of the table, and Lord Maltravers gave one arm to his lady and another to me, and followed them with regular steps, as if he was marching, and looking so comically grave that we could not help laughing, which was just what he did it for.

"But, my dear papa, I cannot tell you how my eyes were dazzled with the brilliancy of the lights, and the glitter of the plate, which covered an immense sideboard, besides all that was upon the table. There were silver soup tureens—two soups, only think!—silver dishes with covers, silver wine-coolers, and many other fine things, the uses of which I could not imagine. Then in the middle was a beautiful long piece of solid silver, like a little table—a *plateau* it was called—all carved so beautifully! and ornamented with four nymphs supporting a sort of pedestal, on the top of which was a vase of flowers. You will know what it was like better than I can describe it, because you have seen such things in your lifetime; but for us, who have never seen anything finer than an old-fashioned silver sugar-tongs, and filagree tea-caddy, and our little pet china tea-things, you may fancy what a scene of splendour and wonderment it was! And the dishes, too, such odd names, but all so nice looking and so good—at least, I know all that I tasted were—and so many of them, too! one after another, one after another. I thought dinner never would be over. I felt so afraid for Margaret when we first sat down, for I thought the lady of the house always had to carve and help to the dishes that were set before her; but these were only just placed upon the table for a moment, all carved and cut up ready, and then handed round; I was silly

enough to think it was Clement's consideration for Margaret, he is so thoughtful in everything, but Lady Maltravers told me afterwards that carving at table is quite out of fashion.

"And then the servants, all with silk stockings and white gloves, only think! and they glided round the table so softly, and whisking away the plates the instant a knife and fork was laid down. And the handsome old butler, too, twice as big and twice as rosy as Doctor Pluffy, and good-tempered looking into the bargain. And then the fine pictures on the walls, all family portraits, and all of them seemed to be looking at us, and dear Clement's father and mother among them, so nice-looking! and Clement looked at them and then at Margaret, and then at Lady Maltravers, and he said to her so affectionately, 'Ah! my dear Julia, our poor mother would have been happy this day, had she lived to see it.'

"'She would, indeed! Clement, dear,' said Lady Maltravers, and her bright eyes filled with tears; 'but we trust she is happier than anything in this world could have made her; so let us be thankful that we see her place so well supplied.'——'Yes, I am fully thankful, I hope,' said Clement; 'I always resolved that, marry when I might, the first day of my happiness should be consecrated to the memory of my mother, by placing my bride in the same chair where we have so often seen her, with looks of love resting upon us all.'

"Margaret cast her eyes down and a tear strayed upon her cheek; I doubt not, dear papa, but that she had her recollections, too, about our own dear mamma—I know I had mine. We were all silent, but Lord Maltravers soon made us cheerful again. He proposed the health of the bride and bridegroom in a bumper, and that it should be drunk throughout the whole house at the same instant, and then he would have the baby brought in, 'to dip its whiskers in the glass,' he said; and he was so merry and said such droll things, that we all got up our spirits again. And after the fine dinner we had such a fine desert! such fruit as I never saw in my life, and could scarcely have believed would grow in England; and such an immense bride-cake in the middle! covered with flowers. And then we had coffee, so strong!—*café noir*, they call it,—but I think they had forgotten the cream; however, nobody seemed to want any, so it did not signify. Then after the coffee, we had two or three curious sorts of wine, called *liqueurs*, in tiny, tiny glasses, like fairy cups; and then we all went into the drawing-room. Such a magnificent carpet, dear papa, it was like walking upon velvet. Such curtains! such sofas! and then the variety of odd-looking chairs—some with high straight backs, some quite low, almost upon the ground, some like cushions put one upon another, some for two people to sit in at once, turned round to each other, face to face, and some actual nursing-chairs, in which ladies or gentlemen, when they are lazy, sit and rock themselves; only think! and every sort has a different name. And then such splendid looking-glasses, and the lamps, and the footstools, and flower-stands, and the tables—some of different sorts of marble put together like patchwork—mosaic, it is called, and some inlaid with different kinds of wood and brass, in patterns of flowers—buhl, they are called, but I am not sure I spell it right; and on many of these tables were beautiful books and

picture, and little cases that looked like books, and when you open them they have little paintings inside; but I shall never have done if I attempt to describe half the things. Such a fine pianoforte too, even Lady Maltravers, who is so used to fine things, called it a grand one, and well she might, for it was all ornamented with gold, and sounded more like a church organ than a piano. There was a splendid harp, too; and Lady Maltravers played and sang so beautifully: Neither Margaret nor I had ever heard the harp before; think how delighted we were! And then tea was brought in; all green, and so strong: I was forced to leave mine, though it had such a delicious fragrant scent that I longed to drink it. And then a little while after came a pretty tray with all sorts of nice little things upon it, and another with glasses of wine and water and lemonade, but we none of us took anything more. And then Lady Maltravers looked at Margaret, and said so kindly, 'Dear Margaret, I am sure you are fatigued with your journey, you are getting quite pale. As for me, I am tired to death, but I must see my darling before I go to bed; let us go and look at him.'

"So we went into the nursery; and when we had kissed the pretty little fellow, very softly, for fear of waking him, we kissed each other, and wished good night at the door; but Lady Maltravers went with Margaret into her room, and I came into mine, all alone; and then I felt very dull, dear papa, for it was the first time in all my life, that I can remember, I ever slept away from my dear Margaret; and it made me feel too surely that I had indeed parted with my sister; but then I tried to think that it was all for her good; and so I cried myself to sleep.

"Well, to be sure! the next morning Mrs. Meadows woke me by tapping gently at the door, and asking me if she should undraw the curtains, as it was near ten o'clock. I was so ashamed! but I had not observed, when I went to bed, that the window-shutters were closed. As soon as they were opened, the bright sunbeams came streaming into the room. I jumped up and ran to the window—what a beautiful sight met my eyes! I expected to have seen the same solemn avenue of tall trees that we had driven up the night before; but I found I was now on another side of the house, looking upon a beautiful lawn skirted with shrubberies, and adorned with beds of flowers. A large sheet of water glittered in the centre, and some stately swans, bright as silver, were poising themselves on its surface. The ground beyond gradually swelled into gentle hills, with venerable oaks scattered about; and on some higher points I saw groups of deer, that stood quite still for a minute or two, as if to sniff the morning breeze, and then darted off into the distant woods.

"But in my eyes, the most beautiful object in all the beautiful scene was dear Margaret herself, walking up and down the lawn with Clement, who held one of her hands in his, and in the other carried a large bouquet of flowers, freshly gathered, and which, when I went downstairs, I found in a beautiful vase, in the middle of the breakfast-table. And oh! my dear papa, how sweetly your Margaret presided! She looked still more lovely in her white cambric morning-dress, and her little lace cap, with the faintest blush on the ribbon, just the colour of her dear cheek, than she did yesterday in her splendid silk. She

seemed to feel herself so at home too, and to be quite happy. And dear Clement looked so delighted! and so proud of her! Yes he did, papa; he actually looked as proud of her as if she had been a duchess; and we know very well that he has no pride himself. And she gave him such a smile, when she handed him his cup! Ah! papa, we have often said what a sweet smile she had, but never have *we* seen her smile as she did then at her husband! there was something so trusting in it—so holy—so pure—truly, dear papa, it was angelical!

"The breakfast was as elegant in its way as the dinner, and prettier, to my thinking, because we had more flowers; and the breakfast-room leads into the conservatory, and it has folding glass-doors that open upon the lawn; and there were silver pheasants and peacocks that came almost into the room for crumbs, and a sweet little tame fawn that came quite in and ate out of Margaret's hand. After breakfast she and Clement set off in a pony-chaise, and as they both told me to do just what I liked whilst they were away, I walked through the drawing-rooms again, and into the library to look at the pictures, and all the fine things at my leisure; but I peeped into each room before I went in, for I assure you, dear papa, I felt very strange among such grandeur and stillness. I scarcely heard a sound but my own footsteps, and instead of there being at least a dozen servants in the house, I should have thought there had not been a living creature in it but myself.

"At last Lady Maltravers made her appearance, and caught me so busy with such a nice book, called 'Lodge's Portraits of Illustrious Persons of Great Britain,' that I actually did not hear her come in. She is so delicate in her health just now, that she is obliged to breakfast in bed, and does not rise before noon, so I had not seen her before; and she kissed me so affectionately—just like a real sister. And then she sat down beside me, and began to tell me all about the great people in the book. Some of her own ancestors are mentioned in it, and many of Lord Maltravers'. How nice it must be, my dear papa, for great people, whenever they look into such fine books, to find something about their grandfathers and grandmothers, and their great uncles and aunts, and all their acquaintance; and so many names they are all as familiar with as we are with those of our next-door neighbours; and of course, if they were not good people, they would not be mentioned.

"When we had looked over the portraits, Lady Maltravers asked me if I had seen the house; and when I told her I had not ventured beyond the drawing-rooms, she put her arm within mine, and took me all over it so good-naturedly.

"'It is a dear place,' she said; 'I love every nook and corner belonging to it. I am afraid I like it better than Maltravers Hall, though it is a mere box in comparison.'

"A box, my dear papa! and this box has a fine entrance-hall, dining-room, breakfast-room, billiard-room, library, steward's-room, and reception-room for persons on business on the ground-floor; a noble picture-gallery, which serves also as a music-room; two large drawing-rooms, and two smaller ones, leading one out of another, *en suite*, as Lady

Maltravers called it ; and two large bedrooms, with two dressing-rooms to each, on the first floor ; on the next are two large nurseries and six bedrooms, large and small. Dear Margaret and Clement have one of the bedrooms on the first-floor, and at present Lord and Lady Maltravers occupy the other. Margaret's was formerly Mrs. Courtney's : it looks upon the lawn, and has a nice balcony full of fine plants. It has a private staircase that leads to the nurseries above and the library below ; and, moreover, it has, in addition to the two dressing-rooms, one of the loveliest little rooms imaginable. It is hung with pale rose-coloured silk, gathered in at the top, and sweeping down to the bottom in folds, like a little tent. In the middle is a round table of white marble, with a writing-case and bronze inkstand, a few books, and a lovely alabaster figure, supporting a ground-glass lamp, that gives a delicate light like the moon. The window is shaded with flowering plants ; the curtains are white net ; the sofa is covered with white over rose-colour, as are two arm-chairs, all that the pretty place will hold. Lady Maltravers says, indeed, it is only meant to receive one friend in at a time, and that it is called a *boudoir*—the original meaning of which, it seems, is a little room for the lady of the house to *post* in, by herself, when she feels sulky ; but the idea, papa, of anybody ever *post*ing or feeling sulky in such pretty places !

"Well, by the time we had seen all the rooms, Clement and Margaret came back, looking so happy ! He had taken her all round the park, and the gardens and the hot-houses, and shown her all the fine things ; and then we had luncheon, which I thought was dinner ; and then dear Julia, for she will not let me call her Lady Maltravers, asked me to go for an airing with her in the carriage. 'They ran away from us, selfish things !' said she, with her sweet laugh, 'so we will run away from them.'

"So we took nurse and baby with us, and we were so merry ! We went to see the almshouses, or the Retreat, as Clement will have them called, for the aged poor who have worked on the Courtney estate ; and they were so glad to see us ! they had all had a nice dinner and a present in money, for some remembrance of the wedding yesterday ; and then we went to the school-house, which was built and endowed, by Mrs. Courtney herself, for twenty-four girls, and we saw them all, and very nice and good they looked. Twelve of them, in turn, are boarded as well as taught ; and they learn to cook, and iron fine linen, and do everything useful, as well as to read and write. And the mistress is such a nice woman, not older than our Mrs. Dunthorne ; she was brought up in the school herself. Clement and Margaret had been there, and given the girls cake and favours ; and on Sunday they are to have new frocks, and tea and cake upon the lawn. Think how pleased they will be to see the swans, and the silver pheasants, and the peacocks ; and they are all to have fruit and flowers to take home with them. And Clement gave the mistress a watch ; and Margaret gave her a handsome silk dress and shawl, which Clement provided her with for the purpose ; indeed, he brought such a quantity of presents with him, no one, old or young, has been forgotten.

"And oh ! my lady," said the nice good woman—I am sure she is very

good—'what a beautiful young lady the bride is! so sweet and amiable she looks! I hope it will please Heaven to grant Mr. Courtney and her many years of happiness together!'

"It is so delightful to me, my dear papa, to see how fond all the people are of our darling Margaret already. And as for Clement, he seems all perfection in their eyes; and no wonder, I am sure. I cannot find out the shadow of a fault in him. And then we went and saw the aviary—and such beautiful birds! And what do you think, papa? I am to have a brace of silver pheasants and a pair of peacocks to bring back with me. Clement proposed it himself—was it not kind in him? and some plants, too, out of the conservatory—how set up we shall be! I am afraid, though, the poor peacocks and pheasants will find themselves sadly cooped up on our little grass-plot, for they must be tethered at first. I shall not be sorry for that, however, they will look so pretty just before the window; and I shall put some of the plants outside, that they may have something to look at they have been used to—it will make them feel more at home. But I shall never have done if I go on describing everything in this manner. In the evening Clement showed us a cabinet of gems—emerald, and topaz, and jasper, and I do not know what fine stones besides, like seals; some with heads upon them, others with figures, gods and goddesses, and animals, so very, very small, like fairy work, yet so perfect, that when we magnified them through a great glass, they looked quite like real pictures and statues; and some were called *uniques*, and Clement said they were the most valuable of all: but, for my part, I was not judge enough to find out in what they were better than the rest: nay, I even thought some of them not so pretty, which was doubtless my ignorance; but Clement explained everything so nicely, and Margaret was so pleased, and she put her hand in his, and said—'How kind it is in you, dear Clement, to bring all your beautiful things out in this manner to amuse us, and to instruct us too.' 'But they are yours, my Margaret, as much as mine, and it is I that am obliged to you for teaching me their value. I seldom, if ever, looked at them before. Most of them were my father's, some my grandfather's, and some I have collected myself; but I never knew before what it was to admire and enjoy them one half as much as I have done to-night.' Was it not kind in him, dear papa, to speak in that manner? but that is the way he always does. He says he never saw the gardens look so fresh as they do this spring, nor the park so green, nor the place altogether so delightful.

"'I always loved it,' he said, 'as my home, and the home of those whom I most dearly loved; but certainly I see beauties in it now, every time we go out together, that I never remarked before.'

"On Sunday, dear papa, we all went to church—such a nice old-fashioned church! with such a number of ancient monuments in it. You know, papa, how proud we are of the one we have in our dear little church of Sir Amias Paulett, with his chain-armour, and his greyhound at his feet. Well, there are twenty here of the same sort; but I did not like any of them so well as ours. The pews were all full, and so were the aisles, for all the country round had come to see the bridal party; and we ourselves, with the servants and tenants, made up a large part of the congregation.

"We had a very beautiful sermon from Doctor Jackson, the vicar—such a venerable old man, with locks of silver shading his cheek of a healthy red, like a winter apple, and bright blue eyes—it was delightful to look at him. The text was the fifth verse of the nineteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, and the sermon was all about marriage, and the infinite beauty and perfection of love. I dare say he meant it particularly for Clement and Margaret. It was very affecting—all the young people wept, and so did I, and so did Margaret; but the truth was, dear papa, we could not help thinking of you every time we looked towards the pulpit.

"The curate read prayers in a very pious and humble manner. He is such an amiable good young man, and his name is James Redgrave. He has dined with us twice since; and I have been with Margaret to see his mother; but I have not come to that yet. Monday was very formidable. Margaret's appearance at church was the signal for all the principal families in the neighbourhood to call upon her: and so we were all three dressed for the occasion, in bridal costume: beautiful white morning dresses, and little French caps. It was the first time in my life I had ever had anything upon my head but a bonnet when I went out. I longed to shake it off again, the ribbons (*volants*, Mrs. Meadows called them) tickled my neck so; but they would not let me.

"Lady Maltravers sat on one side of Margaret and I on the other—quite in state. I do not know what we should have done without Lady Maltravers, she is so kind, and so lively too; she found all the conversation, which was a great help to us; for you know, dear papa, Margaret is silent by nature; and having to receive so many persons of rank and condition so far beyond anything we had ever seen or heard of, was, of course, very trying to her.

"Luckily, the first that came were Lady Maitland (Clement's aunt) and her two daughters. Such a fashionable-looking woman, papa—so elegant, and so much to say. The young ladies, too, had such easy manners! they were at home with Margaret in a minute; and talked away so, just like married women; particularly with Clement: all about France and Italy, and Germany, and Baden-Baden, and I do not know where besides. They seemed to me to have been half the world over; indeed, I think they have forgotten a good deal of their own language with going about so much, for they used more foreign words than English. They are, however, very handsome, and appear very good-humoured. They seemed to take a liking to Margaret at once, and I liked them for that. Clement is very fond of his aunt. He says she is a most excellent woman, and will be quite a mother to Margaret. She was, indeed, exceedingly affectionate to her.

"'How grateful I ought to be!' Margaret said to me afterwards, with tears in her eyes, poor darling; 'what would have become of me if Clement's relations had been unkind and haughty, and had looked down upon me, as many would have done! I stand in need of every support and every advice to enable me to acquit myself as I ought of the duties I am so wonderfully called upon to perform.'

"Do you know, papa, I think she sometimes feels her situation, full of happiness though it certainly is, almost an anxiety to her. She said to me one morning, when we were walking before breakfast, through

the pretty shrubberies, with our arms round each other's waists, as if we were still in our own dear little paddock, 'Do not imagine, dear Lucy, that I think I have been chosen to share in all these fine possessions, and beautiful things, for any merit of my own, or solely that I may have a selfish enjoyment in them. No! I look upon them as a sacred trust, consigned to me as much for my spiritual trial and good as, no doubt, the poverty and griefs we have known so much of, were also. It is solely on the right use I may make of my prosperity that the blessing upon it must rest, and the happiness I may derive from it. My real treasure is my Clement's love—with that I should have been happy in a cottage, and I value his wealth and standing in society only as I may be enabled to heighten his enjoyment of them, and to aid him in making a good use of them.'

"I am sure, papa, she feels all she says. She often walks through the fine rooms with such a reflective air, as if to familiarize herself to their splendour. You know her noiseless and measured tread: we used to say sometimes that she came upon us like a vision. Think, then, what it is to see her gliding so gently over the rich carpets, and her graceful form, every day graceful more and more, reflected from one tall looking-glass to another. Clement laughs at her so, and calls her his 'White Doe of Rylston,' and tells her she

'Comes gliding in with lovely gleam,
Comes gliding in, serene and slow,
Soft and silent as a dream.'

But his eyes follow her everywhere, and he looks so pleased with her! I think they seem to be fonder of each other every hour.

"But I have forgotten our visitors all this time, and now I am tired thinking about great people. We have had what I liked much better—dinners on the lawn for the work-people and the poor, and such rejoicings! and then we have had some delightful drives to the fine places in the neighbourhood, to return our visits, which I enjoyed very much, because we did not get out, only left cards, though it seemed to me an odd way of making acquaintance. And we have had the Maitlands to dine with us, and a very nice day we had; and the venerable old Doctor Jackson was invited to meet them, and the curate too, Clement is always so kind and thoughtful. Margaret and I went ourselves to call upon the good vicar, and to bring him back with us. He is such an excellent man, and does so much good in the parish. O papa! it is such a nice place, the vicarage; it stands close by the church, and is almost covered with picrocanthus and Virginia creeper. It has a bow-windowed room on each side the door, and I think one of them opens with a glass door on the garden behind; but I did not like to look much at anything, for fear the old gentleman might fancy I was thinking of you, dear papa. I am sure, however, we should be as happy in a pretty little place like that, as dear Margaret or Lady Maltravers can be in their fine mansions. Margaret has an innate taste and sympathy for everything that is refined and elegant; every day I can see it develop itself more and more: but as for me, to own the truth, dear papa, I think after all there is something dull in too much grandeur. It removes one too far from one's fellow-creatures—one's 'neighbours.

Then again, I have not much pleasure in fine grounds enclosed within walls, after the first few times one walks round them ; however extensive they may be, still we know their limits, there is nothing new to be expected, nothing can happen by chance in them ; the very points of view are all marked. I had rather by half find them out for myself. I am sure I should in the end prefer a nice heath or common, dotted over with sheep and geese, and cottages and children—or a nice woody lane, that winds about between corn fields and meadows—to all the parks and plantations of the great. It is lucky for me that my tastes are of so humble a kind, for I am very sure no rich man will ever take it into his head to make a fine lady of me.

"The little curate sat next to me at dinner ; I was very glad of it, for I thought he might, perhaps, feel somewhat at a loss, as I had done, among so many fine things. Indeed, he said to me in a low voice, when we sat down, and with such a nice innocent-looking smile, as he was unfolding his napkin, 'You must have the goodness to tell me everything I ought to do.'

"I told him I was only a learner myself, so we got on very well together, and I enjoyed the party very much. He called the next morning with the school reports from the vicar, and Margaret made him stay luncheon, and then she told me to go into the conservatory with him, and choose a *camellia japonica* for his mother. They say he is such a dutiful son ! his mother has only him. They live in such a pretty cottage near the vicarage. But I am coming to the end of my second sheet, and I seem to have written nothing but nonsense—but you will forgive it, I know ; Margaret's letters are the wise ones. Write to her often, dear papa ; your letters are such a comfort to her. She says they give her courage.

"My dear papa, I begin to count the days when we shall meet ; take care of your dear self till then, and of Daisy-face ; remember me to Rose, tell her to take care of you—but she will, I know, for she is a good girl, and the thought of that consoles me for being away from you yet a little longer. And we are all so happy, dear papa, you would be delighted to see us. Anybody would think, when we are by ourselves in an evening, that we were a set of children playing together. Clement and Lord Maltravers are as merry as two school-boys at home for the holidays. Who would think they were so rich ! and so young as they are too, to have so much in their power, and so many people under them ; but it is very nice, dear papa, to see them make such a good use of their blessings, and not to be in any way set up by them, or to attribute any merit to themselves for having them. It shows, dear papa, the truth of what you have often said, that the enjoyments of the rich may be sanctified to them by a proper frame of mind, as much as the sufferings of the poor are by patience and resignation. And now once more, farewell, my dear papa. I shall write again very, very soon, and in the meanwhile answer this letter directly, as it is the first I ever wrote, or else I shall be your deeply-affronted, as well as your dutiful and affectionate daughter,

"LUCY SLENDER."

CHAPTER LV.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

I HAVE this day received the first interruption to the tranquillity and perfect contentment which I have enjoyed ever since the blessed event of my dear Margaret's marriage. Indeed, it has been more than tranquillity—beyond contentment—it has been absolute happiness, a feeling I little thought ever to have experienced again on this side of the grave. But the felicity of my dear child is so inwoven with my own existence, that I seem to live in it afresh ; and so far from feeling divided from her, because we are separated in the body, I actually seem more closely conjoined to her in the spirit ; inasmuch that she is constantly before my internal sight, even more than when she was continually coming within the perception of my corporeal eyes. Lucy, too, is so good, so unchanged ! She cheerfully relinquished all the gaieties and refinements of Courtney Park to return to the humble home which she gladdens with her artless songs ; and then she gives such a double zest, by her grateful appreciation and innocent enjoyment of them, to the comforts we now enjoy, free from debt, always enough beforehand for our moderate wants. I should have been thankful to have ended my days here, with the occasional delight of receiving and visiting my dear Margaret and her husband. I had hoped it might be so ; for Doctor Pluffy had kindly written to me, just before Margaret's marriage, to tell me, repenting, perhaps, of the grief and anxiety he had caused me, that if I were so much attached to Creykedale as to make the quitting it really a subject of unhappiness to me, he should be sorry to hurt my feelings, and therefore begged that I would consider myself as fixed there for as long as I might find it agreeable, or until I might find something more in proportion to my merits. I thought it singular enough that he should express himself so suddenly sensible of my merits as to believe they deserved higher recompense, when, only a few months before, he had seemed to think them over-paid at forty pounds a year ; but I suppose he wished to make me some amends in civility, at any rate, and I was too much delighted with the main sub-

stance of his letter to analyze the expression of it very closely. So I felt once more secure, and thankful, and contented. But alas ! a few days ago I had another letter from him, of a very different tendency, though couched in language still more courteous and complimentary. He told me that in consequence of great and unforeseen misfortunes, of a pecuniary nature, coming upon him, he was compelled to give up his establishment at Gormanton for a time, as being on too expensive a scale for his present resources, and that he should, therefore, be obliged to fix his abode at Creykedale, and do the whole of the church duties himself ; which he seems to think a great hardship—no doubt it will be more fatiguing to him than it was to me, who have always been accustomed to exert myself. But I am surprised he should speak of his misfortunes as coming upon him unexpectedly, as I have understood his debts are of some years accumulation. Some people, however, count it as a misfortune to be obliged to pay their debts at all, however long what they call the evil day may have been driven off. Clement told me, on his marriage with Margaret, that whenever the vicarage should become vacant, by the demise of Doctor Jackson, he hoped to appoint me as his successor. I said then, what I would willingly repeat, that my own ambition would never soar beyond the living of Creykedale, which is two hundred a year ; and that if Doctor Pluffy could make it over to me, and take the vicarage, when vacant, and which is of more than four times the value, I should be most satisfied and grateful. But Clement told me, with that frankness which is one of the many virtues for which I dearly love him, that he should not feel himself justified, to his own conscience, in nominating a man like Doctor Pluffy to the sacred office of spiritual guide to persons who would naturally look up to him as their example as well as teacher. Perhaps he thinks the doctor too worldly in his habits. I did not ask him ; it is no satisfaction to me to talk of faults which I have no power to correct ; but I feel persuaded that it would be of no use to mention the matter again. How thankful I ought to be that I have no longer the prospect of want, to add to my regrets in leaving the scene of so many years' duty and happiness. Then again, should it please the Almighty to remove Doctor Jackson

from this world before me, and he is more than twenty years my senior, I shall have a home for the remainder of my days near my dear child : and it is natural that Lucy should like to be near her sister, whom she loves with an entireness and disinterestedness lovely to behold. Which-ever way I look I see nothing but mercies around me—yea, therefore,

“My soul shall make her boast in the Lord : the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.”

“I sought the Lord, and he heard me ; yea, he delivered me out of all my fear.”

SUNDAY EVENING.—I have taken farewell of my people in a discourse which, at any rate, has so far done justice to the feelings of affection in my breast towards them, as to draw forth evident manifestations of the same in theirs.

I chose for my text the words of St. Paul to Timothy. “The time of my departure is at hand.” I reminded them, that eighteen years before, on my first coming among them, I had addressed them in the words of that same zealous Apostle. “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account : that they may do it with joy and not with grief ; for that is unprofitable for you.”

I passed in review the mutual duties between a pastor and his people. I laid before them a brief analysis of the events that had marked my humble ministry, between that, my first, and this, alas ! my last sermon to them. I exhorted them to continue steadfast in the way in which I had endeavoured, by the blessing of the Lord, to lead them ; and to be dutiful and obedient to those who might come after me, as being instruments in the hands of the Divine Providence for their guidance and good. Then, following the example of St. Augustin, that mirror of grace, humility and love, when he took leave of his people at Hippo, I entreated their forgiveness for all that I might have neglected towards them, in nearly his own words.

“Pardon me, O my people ! to whom I confess all my faults—pardon me for them, I conjure you ; so shall you also obtain the pardon of your sins.” Never was I so much

moved ! never were my congregation so attentive ! A few among them have sometimes, particularly in the sultry time of harvest, offended my natural man, so prone is self-love to take the alarm, by yielding to the temptation of sleep in their afternoon attendance, fatigued, no doubt, by the labours of the week, or perhaps unused to following a lengthened train of thought for any continuance ; but this day not a closing eye or reclining head was to be seen. Young and old were alike attentive. Many tears were shed by the women ; and I saw more than one rough hand, sunburnt with labour, passed over a brow shadowed with silver hairs, to wipe away drops that fell like balm upon my stricken heart, for they showed me that my labours had not been thrown away, my love not unreturned.

When the service was concluded, we were surrounded by the whole congregation—nothing could exceed the kindness and respectful tone of their farewell ; the Primate of all England could not, to all appearance, have received sincerer manifestations of regard, Lucy kissed a number of young folks, whom she, along with Margaret, had instructed in the school, and the parents thanked her for all she and her sister had done for them, and invoked the blessing of Heaven upon their heads. Our hearts were revived by so many cheering demonstrations of affection, and we indulged the hope, that we might still find in our future lot, wherever it might be cast, much of the happiness that had hitherto attended us, even in our humbler fortunes.

Clement has written to me with the affection of a son, to beg that I will make his house my home, and not look out for any other. At present we shall take our little Rose with us, she is a good girl, and it would break her heart to be separated from us ; her mother is delighted at the thought of her preferment, and she can assist the poor woman out of her wages, which she is willing and thankful to do. The chief of the furniture will be Doctor Pluffy's by valuation ; as it was mine, and may have been our predecessors some generations back. It is primitive enough, in appearance ; everything that is actually our own we shall take with us ; not for the intrinsic value, but because there is nothing, however simple, which is not endeared to us by some affectionate remembrance or association. Alas ! my greatest treasure I

must leave behind—beneath the turf I have so many years weeded, and planted with fresh flowers. But, my blessed Lord.

“In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, thy comforts have refreshed my soul.”

“Withdraw not thy mercy from me, O, Lord ! Let thy loving-kindness and thy truth always preserve me !”

CHAPTER LVI.

THINGS KNOWN BY THEIR OPPOSITES.

How true it is, that “what is one man’s meat is another man’s poison.” “Bless me !” exclaims one of my, no doubt, many readers, “what a vulgar saying !” Madam, pardon me ; it was first said by Lord Bacon, therefore it can never be a vulgar saying, in your acceptance of the word : it is, I acknowledge, become a proverb ; and I am aware that proverbs are out of fashion, which I am very sorry for—they were the condensed wisdom of ages ; but in these march-of-intellect days, we are grown too wise to condescend to be instructed by the experience of our forefathers.

“I shall skip this dissertation,” says another of my readers, with an impatience which I feel rather flattering than otherwise, as it shows, at any rate, some desire to know how the *dramatis personæ* are going on. Nevertheless, I will maintain it is not a dissertation, or even a digression : it is an introduction. By the bye, introductory chapters are likewise out of fashion. What a pity ! I think I should have had a genius for them ; one might be so discursive in them ; they were often the best part of a book ; how inimitable Fielding’s were—how full of wit ! But Fielding himself is out of fashion, now ; and even if he were not, it would be very unwise in me to draw attention to anything so incomparably cleverer than what I could ever hope to achieve ; so I will go on steadily to prove the truth of the axiom with which I started.

Doctor Pluffy’s falling state had long been conjectured and commented upon by the majority of his *friends*—some of whom had already erased his name from their debtor and creditor list of dinners, wittily observing—and be it under-

stood between you and I, dear reader (I always get exceedingly fond of my dear readers, in the course of addressing a work to them)—be it understood, then, there is nothing so easy as to be witty at a fellow creature's expense—that the Doctor was an excellent judge of good living, whether or not he was a good liver himself; but, nevertheless, his judgment would avail little to those who might exchange dinners with him at stated periods, if he should no longer have the power to exhibit it in his bill of fare. Soon, however, the doubts of the doubtful, and the scruples of the scrupulous were brought to one unanimous conclusion, by the appearance in that monster chronicle of the events, the requirements, the chances and changes of “many-coloured life,” the *Times*, in the advertisement, easily to be found in its columns by any one who will take the trouble to look for it, of

A DETACHED RECTORY HOUSE,
Seated in its own Grounds, approached
by a Carriage Drive,
Comprising
TWO ELEGANT DRAWING-ROOMS,
thirty-nine feet long, having gilt mouldings, marble chimney-pieces,
and steps to Pleasure Ground;
A CAPITAL DINING-ROOM,
and Library and Bed-room adjoining.
THE GROUNDS,
disposed in Lawn, Plantation, Garden,
and inclusive of a range of Greenhouses, are ornamented with timber,
and surrounded by serpentine gravelled walks, &c. &c. &c.

It is needless to add that the doctor was about to “rusticate,” at Creykedale; and here we come to an original axiom. It would have been very difficult to find two rational beings who should view the pretty parsonage at Creykedale under more opposite lights than it was viewed in by the curate and the rector. The curate wept as he went out, the rector groaned as he went in. To Mr. Slender it had been the abode of happiness and duty, which he looked back upon with mingled feelings of gratitude and regret—to Doctor Pluffy it seemed an imprisonment, to which he looked forward with indignation and disgust.

“What will my poor people do without me? what shall I do without them?” said Mr. Slender, as, over and over again, he turned back to shake hands once more with his

parishioners, who had crowded round him to bid him a last farewell.

"What can I ever do with such clodhoppers? how will they ever understand me?" said the doctor, as he hastily, looking straight before him all the while, touched his hat to the few whom curiosity had induced to linger near the house, and make their obeisance to him as his carriage drew up. It stopped at the gate, which Mr. Augustus Myddleton Plumtree Pluffy, jumping off the box, dutifully opened; whilst Shirley fastened a fine horse that he had ridden to the rails. Out got the doctor, out got Mrs. Pluffy, out got their two daughters, Mrs. Shirley taking precedence of her sister as a married woman, repeating, with a sentimental sigh, as she followed her papa and mamma,

"The wicket opening with a latch,
Received the harmless pair."

"Harmless, indeed! you may well say that, Emily," said the doctor, as he stopped to disentangle the tail of his coat from a thorn, which had done its best to attach him to a rosebush. Her mamma turned round with a reproving look.

"Don't vex your papa, my dear, I don't know why people should think him any more harmless now than he was at the Rectory; he is just as much of a gentleman here as he was there."

"Oh, Emmy was always poetical, you know," said the young man, filling the ambient air with the perfume of his cigar, "let's have it all, Emmy—

"No stores beneath the humble thatch
Required the master's care!"

"You have taken pretty good care to lessen whatever stores I might have brought beneath it," said the doctor somewhat sternly. So Augustus gave a whiff, and tipped his sisters the wink, and held his tongue.

"What a sweet little garden," exclaimed Mrs. Shirley, plucking some violets that seemed to have popped out their heads from the grass-plot expressly to welcome the new comers.

"It is a very vulgar one," said Miss Pluffy, "that mignonette is so countrified; there is southern-wood, too

detestable ; I never see it without thinking of a country bumpkin, with a *posy* in his button-hole on a Sunday."

"There are some nice pot-herbs in this corner, though," said the doctor, a little cheered at the sight ; "a sprig of that sweet basil is the best thing in the world for giving a flavour to mock-turtle soup ; it was one of Birch's secrets."

"Well my dear," said Mrs. Pluffy, "that we can try at any rate ; we will get a calf's head to-morrow."

"My dear," said the doctor, with a desponding shake of his own, "you little know what it is to live in a place like this ; very likely there is not a calf killed in it once a month ; but, however, I have made up my mind. God's will be done."

"Ah ! Augustus," said Mrs. Pluffy, in an audible whisper to her son, "you see what a man your father is. What a noble example he sets you !" The collegian whiffed his cigar in her face, with a graceful inclination of the head, and the whole party entered the house.

The doctor ensconced himself in Mr. Slender's arm-chair ; it was somewhat tight for him, and its lack of cushions, and its straight back, covered with black leather, somewhat the worse for twenty years' wear, made him think of his own magnificent red morocco *fauteuil*, with a bitterness of comparison not quite in harmony with the system of resignation and philosophy he had just before professed to have laid down for himself.

"This little bow-window is not amiss," said Miss Pluffy. "I can put my camellias, and my japonicas on the ledge, and I will have my work-table here, and put up my book-shelves on each side, and then it will make something of a boudoir"—and into the magic circle of this boudoir, she silently resolved to attract Mr. Muggins, at his very earliest convenience ; for she had fully determined within herself that it was more desirable to take the lead even in an inferior circle, as the wife of a rich tradesman, surrounded with every comfort, than to sink into insignificance, as the spinster of a fallen family.

The "love of a kitchen" was next explored, the little oven was honoured with the doctor's approbation—they could have cakes for breakfast, and he thought it would be easy to add a hot-plate, and a couple of stewing stoves,

by means of which a dinner might still be eked out, on a small scale, in tolerable taste.

"And we can keep a few fowls," said Mrs. Pluffy, "and, perhaps, a pig."

"And we will send you lots of game and plenty of venison," said Shirley; "won't we Emily? Every week we can pack up a hamper of something or other."

The doctor looked at his son-in-law with a respect he had never before felt for him, and his countenance expanded into something of its former breadth of radiance, as he said, "Sir, I am sure you are a gentleman, I do not doubt your consideration, or Emily's either; she was always a good girl, and I hope you will find a treasure in her."

"She is my own," exclaimed Shirley, "and I so rich in having her,

'That were the globe one solid chrysolite
I would not change her for it.'

and he suited the action to the word, by drawing her close to him, and imprinting a kiss on her cheek; at which indecorum Miss Pluffy turned away her head, but neither he nor Emily seemed in the least abashed by the silent reproof, and when they had seen things fairly settled, they took their leave, much the gayest of the party, and Emily was conveyed back to Cambridge, escorted by her husband, in the same carriage which, for the last time, had had the honour of containing Doctor Pluffy and his family.

Great was the sensation in the little village of Creykedale on so important an event as the real parson coming to reside there instead of the curate. True, Doctor Pluffy was shorn of his beams, but still he was a meteor in the eyes of his humble parishioners; and when the Sunday after his arrival came, the church was more crowded than it had ever been within the memory of man, save on the ever-memorable day of Margaret Slender's marriage.

Certainly, in one sense of the word, the doctor filled the pulpit better than Mr. Slender had done—his portly person rose far above the desk, where his curate's pale thin face, and somewhat pinched nose, ever susceptible of cold, used to be seen, nearly on a level with it; the doctor, likewise, had the precaution always to have a well-stuffed cushion under him, so that he scarcely lost any of his height, even when

seated ; whereas Mr. Slender, simple man, contented himself with the bare bench, and was scarcely seen at all till he rose to offer up the prayer preparatory to his sermon.

The doctor chose for his text, "How are the mighty fallen," and opened his discourse with a delicate intimation to his auditors, that he considered the words as peculiarly applicable to himself ; fallen as he was from his "high estate" at Gormanton, surrounded by the magnates of the county, to dilute his grandiloquence to the muddy comprehensions of the clods of the valley, to whom it was his fate then to address himself. He took occasion to descant, from his own example, as he gave them to understand, upon the beauty and excellence of humility—the folly and unprofitableness of ambition. He warned his hearers to eschew it, as fraught with evils to their repose ; he besought them not to seek after dignities and high places, and assured them they slept more soundly on their straw pallets than did the statesman on his bed of down ; and that it could not one whit contribute to their real happiness to be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day. The majority of his hearers, being day-labourers, or small artizans, felt pretty well assured they should never be called upon to make the experiment ; nevertheless, they greatly respected the doctor for seeming to be so well acquainted with the grand people whose discontents he described in such flowery language and sonorous tones ; they wondered at his condescension in taking so much pains to point out to them the dangers of sudden exaltation, and the evils of wallowing in luxury. The diamond ring, which still glittered on his little finger, and his cambric handkerchief, still gracefully waved in harmonious accompaniment with his well-turned periods, added to the effect of his elocution, and proportionably increased the attention with which his congregation listened to him : in short, from his shovel-hat down to his shining shoes, he ensured wonder and respect. Mrs. Pluffy, as "art and part" with himself, came in for her full share of admiration ; her rich flounced silk dress, her fine shawl, her bright piony bloom, her perpetual smiles, her civil speeches, and extra condescension, were all duly appreciated ; and even Miss Pluffy, who neither bloomed nor smiled, nor made speeches of any kind, found some who

remarked that she held up her head very well, and had a very quality kind of nose ; and the shoemaker said she had a pair of uncommon well-fitting boots on, and he was sure they were the crack Cambridge cut. Mr. Allspice had taken one survey of the pew wherein he used to see Margaret's sweet eyes, lifted up towards the pulpit—that one was enough for him ; he was never seen to take another. Nor was the comparison between the doctor's sermons and those of Mr. Slender less unfavourable to the new-comer, in the opinion of Mr. Allspice—and in this respect he did not stand alone. After a few Sundays had worn off the gloss of the rector's appearance, and familiarised his congregation to his showy and imposing eloquence, they began to miss the curate's clear and truthful explanation of the Holy Word, and his affectionate exhortation to them to “keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace at the last.”

The poor missed his sympathies, and his unwearied exertions in their behalf with those who were better gifted than himself with the means of relieving their necessities ; they missed his daughters, too—their cheering countenances, and their deeds of love. Yes, all the best part of Creykedale regretted the family of the Slenders more and more every day, and every day felt more and more that the family of the Pluftys no way made up for their loss : whilst the Pluftys returned the compliment, by every day heartily wishing themselves anywhere but where they were.

Still the scale on which the rector's household orders were issued gave him a vast superiority over the curate, in the eyes of the trading portion of his parishioners.

“Two pounds of fresh, and two of salt,” said the butterman to his wife, knocking off with his wooden spatula, as he spoke, an extra morsel of the butter, which he added, in the presence of the cook, to make weight. “Why, poor Mr. Slender never had more than half a pound in a week, and not always that ; and then we are to send half a pint of cream reg'lar every day. Well, after all, I do think it is more for the interest of true religion, that real gentlemen, such as I call Doctor Pluffy, should be in the church ; I mean such as keeps up a genteel appearance, and lives well, which I call doing real good. In my opinion, we shall have

fewer dissenters, now that we have got a man of his consequence among us ; he will keep us more together. I know that I, for one, shall go to church reg'lar now—and you will too, I hope, my dear. Mr. Straightlocks will be long enough before he catches me in his barn of a meeting-house again. I've had such a cold ever since I was there last, it has cost me more than all his custom is worth, in treacle possets and burgundy-pitch plasters."

Next, the butcher congratulated himself on his new customer. "Six pounds of gravy beef, to begin with, and a piece of the sirloin—a breast of veal, with the sweet-bread ; and a calf's head, bespoke, and a leg of mutton selected, to be hung ten days ; its identity and date secured by a curious little padlock and slip of ivory, of the doctor's own invention, for that especial purpose. Certainly, there would not have been such a consumption in Mr. Slender's family, from Christmas to midsummer—and then the gravy beef, perhaps it was meant for soup for the poor—every week the same quantity, it surely must be so."

The baker also thought the rector more desirable, as a resident in the parish, than the curate, for he had hot rolls every morning, and always new bread ; and so thought everybody else, who hoped to gain anything by him, save Mr. Allspice, who sighed and said nothing, and Mr. Greensides, who rarely said anything, but thought the more, and Mrs. Greensides and Miss Nancy, whose hearts and memories were still warm with the recollection of the curate's love for his parishioners, and the sweet, unassuming demeanour of his daughters.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE WIND-UP.

HUMAN life is a curious thing, dear readers, a solemn, a mysterious, and seemingly an uncertain thing. Which of us must venture to withdraw the veil in which it appears wrapped, if he might have the power to do so, from the face of futurity, and look with an unshrinking eye at his position, whatever it might be at the end of any given period ? I am sure I durst not—no hopes, no fears, would

tempt me to take a single glance at it in my own person ; but in the capacity of stage manager over my *dramatis personæ* I may venture to lift the curtain to my readers, and give them a sort of panoramic view of the various personages in whom they may have so far flattered me as to take an interest at the end of ten years from the conclusion of my last chapter.

Out of respect to the church, we would fain have begun with Doctor Pluffy ; but that reverend gentleman, very soon after his dignified retreat to Creykedale, departed this world, in consequence of his extraordinary exertions at a visitation dinner to make up for the time he had lost since his leaving Gormanton, with respect to turtle soup and vension. A marble tablet to his memory may, however, be seen in the most conspicuous part of the church at the said place, recommending his learning and his orthodoxy, his public benevolence and his private virtues, and winding up his eulogium by stating that he died as he lived—in the performance of his duties.

Mrs. Pluffy would have been inconsolable had she been left in solitude to brood over the excellencies of her departed husband—large as was the scale on which they had always been presented to her eyes ; but in the affection of her “married daughter,” the good-natured attention and thoughtful generosity of her son-in-law, who, immediately after her bereavement, pressed her to make his house her future home ; the exceeding respect of Mr. and Mrs. Shirley, senior, with whom a clergyman’s widow was an object of equal compassion and veneration ; the caresses of her grandchildren ; and the gratification of occasionally dining at Maltravers Hall, she gradually talked of becoming resigned to the great and heavy loss, which, physically considered, hers certainly was ; though she continued her mourning from year to year, after the term generally prescribed for it was expired, in order, as she said, and no doubt persuaded herself to believe was, to show her respect to the memory of the deceased. But, as few motives ever stand entirely alone in this, our warfare of life, she would have seen, had she looked more narrowly at hers, that it was flanked by two others. One, that, at her critical time of life, and with her complexion, which no internal griefs could change from the red rose to the white,

black was, perhaps, altogether the most becoming thing that she could wear;—the other, that if, by any chance—although she professed it was so utterly unlikely, nay, that, for her own part, she should never believe it possible till it actually did happen—if, by any chance, she should ever marry again, not that she could ever think of such a thing for a moment, except from the consideration, that if a very good offer were to present itself to her, it might be her duty to accept it, in order not to burthen Frank and Emmy longer than necessary—why, then, in that case, one refitting of her wardrobe, and going into colours again, would do, and all her things would be new, and in the latest fashion at once.

Miss Pluffy, after pouting some weeks at Creykedale, began to think, according to the vulgar adage, that “a fat sorrow was better than a lean one,” and therefore condescended to give her hand to Mr. Muggins, notwithstanding the little flattering manner in which he requested it, assuring her that he was too much a man of his word to go from an agreement. “And though certainly Doctor Pluffy was very differently situated from what anybody thought when I first had the pleasure of your acquaintance, yet as you were kind enough then to show me so much encouragement, before I had said anything to signify, I should be very sorry to take advantage of the alteration in your papa’s circumstances to make any alteration in my intentions, as expressed at the time when I thought, from the appearance he was a making, he was better off; and so if you are agreeable, I am sure I am all the same; and when Doctor Pluffy gets over his difficulties, which no doubt he will, if he is careful and managing, as people in difficulties ought to be, why then, naturally, he will go back to Gormanton, and he may be as respectable as ever; and I am sure I shall not be the person to twit him with what has gone by, though I must say, I think Miss Emily having married a player is a great let down to all the family, and not one that can be easily got over.”

It was well for Mr. Muggins that he was not kneeling at Miss Pluffy’s feet when he made her this offer of his *and*; for she would assuredly have felt a strong inclination to have pushed him away upon the carpet; but prudence was the predominant feature of her moral character, and could

conquer even her pride, which certainly came next. Hence she swallowed up all her unpleasant feelings, became Mrs. Muggins, imbibed a considerable portion of her husband's XXX ale every day in compliment to him, and balanced it with a proportionate quantity of wine, in order that she might be enabled to form an impartial opinion of the sanatory merits of the different fluids, kept a table such as her papa had accustomed her to, maintaining that there was nothing so respectable as a good dinner, and soon promised to assume much of her papa's weight and proportions. She then began to feel the vanity of worldly things, found out that her papa had never preached the gospel, and that his misfortunes were a judgment upon him. Her next step was to "turn serious." She then became "a decided character," and was looked upon as a great addition, in her rich silks and satins, to the tea and Bible parties, wherein her handsome suppers were found a very reviving wind-up, and Mr. Muggins found some consolation for the loss of his father-in-law's consequence in the High Church, by the success of his wife in the Low ; so he set up a carriage, to reward her for her exertions, and she paid her visits of charity in it, to the dismay of the poor people, who never saw it stop at their doors without anticipating a lecture upon the sinfulness of their ways, or the improvidence of their habits.

Augustus Myddleton Plumtree Pluffy, finding that his father could do nothing more for him, thought it was high time for him to do something for himself. He therefore "took to the road," in the pacific acceptation of the term, and for three or four years made a respectable figure, as the unclassical coachman, on the box of the "Highflyer," where he generally had some old college chum or other to take a place at his side, and occasionally "handle the ribbons ;" the half-crown on parting being given on one side, and received on the other, with a knowing wink and a hearty shake of the hand—but, alas ! the railroad started at fifty miles an hour, in opposition to the "four-in-hand" at twelve—and who could run against it ? Augustus did his utmost, and had day by day the advantage of less and less weight, till at last the guard with nothing to guard, and himself with no passengers to admire his whip, were all that remained of the "Highflyer's" glory, and the next day the clear blast of its

horn and the light and regular ring of its horses' hoofs upon the macadamized road were not to be heard. Augustus, however, was not to be beaten off the road himself, though his coach was. With the aid of Simpson's brother, he set up a handsome public-house—he had the good sense not to call it an hotel—near one of the stations, where, being within half an hour's run from town, it became a great favourite, under the name of the "Champion of England," with the professional gentlemen who are specially designated "The Fancy," and with the nobles and magnates who have a special fancy for those same gentlemen and their handiworks, insomuch that Augustus thought himself called upon, as a man of honour, to show his gratitude to Simpson's brother, by marrying Simpson herself. He had favoured her with a considerable share of his attention, whilst she was his mother's maid, and he now found out that her clear complexion, and black ringlets, set off with a little cap, and bright pink ribbons, at the back of her head, and her smart figure and coquettish manners—for there are coquettes of every grade in civilized society—would be very attractive behind the bar. "If I put her there, and don't marry her, somebody else will," he argued with himself, and so the deed was done.

Mr. Muggins would have resented very much this second blow to the family dignity, had it not been for the eulogiums passed upon his beer, by the patrons of the "Champion of England," and the quantity they drank of it, which led him to suppose they could not be so immoral a set of people as they were generally represented. And as for Augustus himself, he actually, by some strange warp in his reasoning faculties, not only maintained to others, but was convinced in his own mind, that he was a more truly respectable character, earning his living in an honest way, and laying claim to nothing more than he really was, than he should have been, by taking solemn oaths respecting articles that he imperfectly comprehended, and by no means implicitly believed, and receiving the emolument of a sacred office, the duties of which he felt neither inclination nor capability to perform.

Leaving him, therefore, perfectly satisfied with himself, and in the midst of "lots" of acquaintances, old and new, who pronounced him to be a good fellow, and his liquors as

good as himself, we will turn our eyes to Maltravers Hall, and to the young couple by whom the honours of that ancient house were represented.

Henry and his Julia are exactly the same as the Earl and Countess of Maltravers as they were when they were Lord and Lady Orville—still almost as much boy and girl as they were in their cottage on the Moors, or their little lodging at Cambridge—only now they are surrounded by half a dozen more little boys and girls, with bright eyes and slender legs, among whom papa and mamma look like elder brother and sister, and they play with them and with each other as if they were such; but the rose on Julia's cheek does not bloom quite so freshly as before—she has had her family so quickly, that her health has become too delicate to allow of her entering much into society. Happily for her, her husband has no inclination for the gay world; he desires nothing beyond his own house, his own domains, and his own county. Without any very decided traits of character, he has a general amiability and kindness of heart, of which all connected with him feel the beneficial influence. He keeps a pack of hounds for the good of the neighbourhood—race-horses for the credit of the turf. He is indulgent to his tenants, lenient about his game, and charitable to the poor; throws his fine picture-gallery and state-apartments open to all that find pleasure in coming to look at them, and permits pic-nics in his park and ornamented grounds; both he and Julia feeling their own enjoyments doubled in seeing others also enjoy themselves. He is a Conservative, and a supporter of the Church Establishment, because his father was so before him; but he takes no further part in politics than to show himself occasionally in the House of Peers. He now and then treats himself with a frolic with Shirley, and runs away for two or three days, where to nobody knows but Julia, who always welcomes him back again with the same smile of love with which he greets her on his return.

Mr. and Mrs. Shirley, senior, were delighted from the first with their son's marriage, trusting that it would be the means of his leaving off his vagrant courses, and betaking himself to the ways of his forefathers.

"Such a creditable choice he had made, too," said his

mother; "such a respectable connection! the daughter of the Reverend Dr. Pluffy!" and in the good old lady's ears, the title of the "Reverend Doctor Pluffy" sounded quite as imposing as ever that of "the Right Honourable the Earl of Maltravers" had done. And then, "her daughter-in-law was *so genteel*!—such a lady! and all the neighbours thought so too! and she was *so amiable*!" And, indeed, Emily Eleonora had always had more heart, with all her romance, than Miss Pluffy, with her worldly wisdom; and she was now so completely happy, that all her best qualities were called forth, and appeared to the greatest advantage. She loved her husband with the most admiring fondness; her affection for him naturally extended itself to his parents: she was caressed by them as if she had been their own daughter; she was surrounded with every comfort, and saw herself the centre of a circle which, if not quite so *prétentieux* as that of Gormanton, yet made up for the deficiency by much greater admiration of her smattering of music and drawing, and her boarding-school French, and by the profoundest veneration for the apparent esteem in which she was held at the "Great House," where she and her husband were invited to dine much more frequently than their titled neighbours thought consistent with the dignity of the peerage. Her sphere, alike of happiness and importance, was, in due time, enlarged by the birth of a son and heir. The old people were overjoyed at the prospect of the stewardship thus being continued in the family to the third generation, and her husband, in an ecstasy of paternal pride, declared that the boy should be called HAMLET.

"I did not know you were acquainted with him," said his father.

"Acquainted with him!" echoed the son. "What! not acquainted with 'Hamlet, Prince of Denmark!'" folding his arms as he spoke, and repeating, in a sepulchral tone,

"To be, or not to be? that is the question."

"It is, indeed" said his father; "but, for my part, I was thinking of Mr. Hamlet, the silversmith, at the corner of Sidney's Alley."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Frank Shirley. "Then he shall not be called 'Hamlet;' he shall be called 'Romeo.'"

Yes! I came out in 'Romeo.' Ah! father, if you had seen me in the vault, throwing myself upon 'Juliet' after I had taken the poison!"

"I saw Romeo Coates die in it a good many years ago," said the old gentleman; "he was reckoned a clever fellow enough. I remember he did die capitally, sure enough. The people encored him, and he did it again, two or three times over."

"Worse and worse! I must not associate my first-born with the remembrance of Romeo Coates; he would never forgive me when he came to years of discretion. Let me see—what shall it be? I think it shall be 'Othello!'"

"Othello!" said his astonished mother, "why, my dear Frank, 'Othello' was a blackamoor, wasn't he?"

"No, mother, not altogether black; that is a vulgar error—brownish—swarthy. To be sure, he says,

"'Haply, that I am black;'

but he means comparatively, as in the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' where it says

"'Black men are pearls in beauteous ladies' eyes.'"

He certainly does not mean blackamoors. I never, myself, played 'Othello' black entirely. But, perhaps, that name would not do. What do you say to 'Cymbeline?'"

"Is that a Christian's name?" asked Mrs. Shirley. "Perhaps the clergyman would object to it. Now, my father's name was Benjamin,—Benjamin Buggins, and a very honest man he was; and your grandfather Shirley's name was Abraham,—odd enough, that they should both be Scripture names; but I am rather partial, myself, to Scripture names."

Her son did not take the hint,—in fact, he did not hear it, for he was reviewing in his "mind's eye" a train of Shakspeare's heroes, as long as the procession of kings that appeared to Macbeth,—

"Another, and another still succeeds."

"Ah, now I have it!" he exclaimed; "he shall be Orlando!"

"Oh, yes, dearest!" cried the new mamma, who had till

then listened passively to the debate in all the luxury of convalescence, with her baby nestled close to her on her pillow; I should so like that! Orlando is such a sweet name!"

"Well, then, Orlando it shall be,—it shall be 'as you like it,' my Emmy—my own Emmy;" and then he kissed her and the young Orlando over and over again; and the grandmamma and grandpapa looked as delighted as if the baby had been their own, and agreed that it ought to be as dear Emily wished.

"To be sure it sounds a little romantic," old Mrs. Shirley could not help observing,—“rather uncommon,” she was afraid their neighbours would think. Her husband, however, sought to comfort her on this head, by assuring her that the name was not at all uncommon—in the racing calendar.

‘Why,’ said he, “don’t you remember the old earl’s bay colt ‘Orlando,’ that won the sweepstakes at York, the first year we were married? I took you to the racecourse myself, behind me on a pillion, you know. And only last spring, there was Squire Hawthorn, at the Beeches, backed his chestnut horse, ‘Orlando,’ rising four years old, against the field at Doncaster, and won with him; so let us hope that the name will be lucky.”

The ten years that have passed over our stage-struck hero’s head since the birth of his first-born, have made him something of “a wiser” though not “a sadder man.” He rides about with his father in a business sort of style to qualify himself for the succession to the stewardship; but is always the first to volunteer his services in the theatrical way, public or private, whenever a plea of charity, or any other decent excuse, presents itself to him. He is as fond of his wife, and as kind to her as he was the first week of his marriage; and he has lost none of his attractions in her eyes. They are now surrounded by a train of boys and girls, whom he calls his “Shakspeare Gallery”—and a motley group they are. The “melancholy Jacques” is the greatest pickle in the whole village; the “fiery Hotspur” a meek and timid boy, always at his mother’s knee; a little saucy fat Viola, who seems not very likely ever to

“Let concealment, like a worm i’ the bud;
Feed on her damaak cheek;”

and the gentle Desdemona, so far from being a maid so quiet that

“She blush’d at her own motions,”

is the veriest romp in nature ; climbs over gates, and gets into trees with her brothers, and is friends with everybody that comes into the house in a minute. Wild, unchecked, sunburnt, with running about the woods and farm-yards all the day long, they are all, save the misnamed Hotspur, as strong as young lions, and as merry as mountebanks, to the infinite contentment of their father, who is never weary of their mirth, and the exceeding pride and delight of their grandfather and grandmother Shirley, who always advocate their having their own way, and being happy as long as they can.

But now we must turn our eyes to those for whom our earliest interest was awakened ; and, therefore, we shift the scene to Courtney Lodge and its immediate environs—and whom have we here, walking under that long line of beeches, in order to escape the flood of light which the sun is pouring round him just before he sets behind yonder hill ? It is our worthy friend, Mr. Slender himself ; he does not quite escape the rays that touch the foliage above his head with burnished gold ; they touch his brow also, and give it something of seraphic radiance—it is only the natural expression of his countenance a little heightened by the passing incidents. It retains all the simplicity, the benevolence, that marked it when we first saw him cheerily skipping up and down the causeway on his road to Gormanton ; but it has somewhat more of seriousness, even of abstraction in it. He has been nearly ten years the successor of Doctor Jackson ; the change in his worldly circumstances has only increased his sense of responsibility, his earnest desire to acquit himself of his duties, which appear to him under new phases, under every dispensation that falls to his lot. Still there is a fulness of contentment in his aspect, an affectionate smile plays at the corners of his mouth ; for he has just been to see his Margaret, on her return from a visit with her husband and children to Maltravers Hall, for the frequent interchange of these visits forms the greatest enjoyment of both families. He is recalling to himself how she

looked, what she said, how affectionately Clement shook him by the hand, how his grandchildren ran to meet him. He would not stay dinner because he had some parochial duties to attend to ; but he was only suffered to go away upon his promise that he would come the next day for the whole day, and bring Lucy and her husband and their children with him.

And who is Lucy's husband—and where?—but Mr. Slender shall give us all the statements that we have time for in his own words. He is winding up his account of the year in his journal, and we shall take the privilege of old friends, and look over his shoulder, and transfer his pages to ours, wherewith to take farewell of our readers.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE CURATE'S JOURNAL.

I HAVE closed the old year upon my knees, in humble thanksgiving for the mercies vouchsafed to me in the course of it, by the Giver of all good. When I arose I passed in review all that has befallen me the last ten years of my life, and truly I was lost in wonder and gratitude when I thought of all the outward prosperity and internal peace which have been granted me the whole of that time ! My Margaret, my first born, her mother's image, the pride of my heart, has been raised by the generosity of a most admirable and excellent young man, who loves her with a perfect love, to a fortune and condition, which, happily, nature has given her every requisite to adorn. Her native graces are heightened, and her mind enlarged, by intimate association with highly-educated persons, and by foreign travel, which has imparted to her its polish, without any of the tinsel of its affectations. Warm and cheerful in her hospitalities, prudent and exact in her domestic arrangements, her house is the abode of peace and love, order and social enjoyment ; but what delights me most of all, and for which I am most abundantly grateful, is that she retains, amidst all her affluence and all the importance which it naturally gives her in society, all the meekness and lowliness of heart which she has ever had

from a child. Her husband, still her fond admiring lover, as well as her tenderest friend, finds fresh motives for the exertion of his fine talents and benevolent principles, in the delight she manifests on seeing them so fully appreciated by all around him. He will indeed, I doubt not, be one of the first, as he is one of the best, men in the country, and I hope a blessing to it. Out of five lovely children, with which they have been blessed, one only they have been called upon to resign—and doubtless the affliction of losing that one was sent them for wise and good purposes, to remind them of the sorrows to which human life is continually open. My poor Margaret's maternal heart had always rejoiced with them that did rejoice, and this stroke taught her also to weep still more sympathizingly with them that weep ; but she is always most tender and considerate in her deeds of love. Well may her presence be hailed as it is, by the poor and the afflicted, as an angel of consolation ! And then how loving she is to her sister ; how she rejoices when they meet ! how dutiful, how affectionate to me ! And Clement, how kindly he always welcomes me ! how affectionately he always calls me father ! Truly he is my beloved son, the benefactor of all belonging to me, to whom, under Heaven, I owe all my earthly blessings !”

Then there is my sweet Lucy, the light of my hearth, the prop of my old age. She is as happy at the vicarage as her sister is at Courtney Park. She cares not for deer, or for peacocks, or any other fine things, whilst she has her cows, and her poultry, and her bees, which her husband laughingly calls her pin-money. And what an excellent young man he is ; How thoroughly devoted to the duties of his calling ! How tenderly he loves his wife and her pretty prattlers, whose sweet, shrill voices gladden my walls, and fill them with echoes of days gone by. They are, indeed, formed for each other ; her vivacity is to him what it has ever been to me ; as sunlight on the hills, or the song of birds in the spring ; it contrasts, moreover, so prettily with his mild seriousness ; though she is serious, too, when duty requires it of her. When he preaches she is the most attentive and admiring of his auditors ; and when he converses on religious topics, she shows, in her “chaste conversation, coupled with fear,” such lovely teachableness and humility

as might well win her husband's heart, even if it had not been won, as he has often said, from the first moment of his beholding her. I take shame to myself that at first I felt some reluctance to bestow her upon him because he was only a curate. I thought it might not be agreeable to Clement to see his wife's sister settled so close to them, in a situation so comparatively humble; but I did him great injustice by admitting such an idea into my mind even for a moment. I am very sure it never entered his. He is as kind to James Redgrave as he is to Lucy—a true brother to them both. He would double their income, if they would let him; but neither James nor Lucy will hear of it.

"I have enough," says James, "for all that I require. I am fully contented with what Providence has assigned me. In taking that which I do not earn, I might, perhaps, be robbing a fellow-creature who may be in necessity and incapable of assisting himself."

Truly such an apostolic spirit in so young a man is admirable. Well, indeed, does St. Paul say, "Godliness, with contentment, is great gain." Lucy, too, has so much delicacy that she does not like to expose the disinterestedness of her sisterly affection to the restraint of perpetual obligation.

"If I wanted anything, I would come to you for it, dear Margaret," she said; "but we should give a bad example to our neighbours if we were to make an appearance beyond our station, by taxing your generosity. No, my dear sister; satins and blondes for you, muslins and net for me. We have each what our stations require. You acquit yourself of your duties in a high one, and I am thankful that mine, in a humble one, are less difficult."

Then Margaret kisses her, and says that she is right; but still, what with the excuse of birthdays, and wedding-days, and Christmas-day, and new-year's day, and anniversaries of any other day that can be made a plea for kindness, there is not, I verily believe, one single week in the whole year that is suffered to pass without some token of remembrance finding its way from the Park to the Parsonage.

As for myself, one-third of my income of nine hundred a year—how little did I ever dream of having one of a third of the amount!—I devote to the poor and charitable purposes; the remainder I divide with James, my curate, my fellow-

labourer, and my son-in-law. And with Lucy's good management, we keep up between us an establishment of respectability and decent plenty, as those who contribute to it have, in some degree, a right to expect from us. And how fortunate I am in retaining my dear Lucy and her husband, and their sweet babes, beneath my own roof! I thus enjoy the tranquillity of old age, without its usual drawback of loneliness. Dividing my time between my clerical duties and my dear children, able to receive a friend at my board whenever I wish it, and to perform daily acts of charity and social kindness to those around me, I find myself in the possession of every earthly good that I can desire. Truly may I say—

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

I seem to live in quite another world, and my fellow-creatures might seem altogether another race of beings—so polite, so respectful, so cordial they are, continually proffering me services, and seeking out occasions to please me by some attention or compliment. 'Well, indeed, it is for me that I have gone through the ordeal of so many years' poverty, and its inseparable attendants—insignificance, contempt, and neglect; I might otherwise fail to recognize myself through the misty and enfeebling atmosphere of wealth, with flattery at her side. I can now make abundant allowance for the false estimate that persons, lapped from infancy in affluence and distinction, must continually make of themselves, and of others; but I should be most unpardonable could I forget myself; and, indeed, I have reason to be anything but proud, for as an object placed in a brighter light may betray flaws and blemishes undiscovered before, so every new state we are called to makes manifest in us new evils, to be combated against with increased vigour. I see many faults in myself, now that I am rich, which I was never sensible of when I was poor. Perhaps it is for this very reason that I have been trusted with such a change of circumstances, in order to show me myself more clearly; assuredly it is from no merit of my own. I detect little impatiences in my temper, which, no longer tried by real anxieties, has time to fret itself about trifles. I was vexed yesterday that the cook had forgotten, strangely

enough to be sure, to boil the fish. I, that have so often dined on bread-and-cheese, to care for a dish more or less! And this morning I was more angry than I ought to have been with my man, because he had not cleaned the harness; he had, moreover, neglected to feed the horse, which was a much greater fault; the fact is, that he is a sad idle fellow, and I should have discharged him long ago, had it not been on account of his wife and family, for I fear he would never stay long in any other place.

Yes, it behoves me to keep an incessant and searching watch over myself. I fear lest habits of self-indulgence and indolence may creep upon me unawares. I am jealous of myself, lest the comforts I enjoy, the entire exemption in which I live from worldly cares, should deaden my sympathies for the anxieties and sorrows of others, and slacken my zeal for their spiritual welfare. I fancy sometimes that I am less alert, less willing to quit my fireside in an evening, to visit a sick parishioner at some distance, of late, than I was ten years ago, when I used cheerily to cross the moor in all directions, at all times and in all weathers, to look after the sheep and lambs of my little flock. To be sure, one does not grow younger, but it is easy to make excuses for everything.

"Who can tell how oft he offendeth? Lord, cleanse Thou me from my secret faults."

Yes, I will put my trust in Him who has supported me in my adversity, and will not forsake me in my prosperity. I will rejoice in Him, and daily offer up to Him the incense of a grateful and adoring heart.

THE END.

